Coproduction of text message content to support NHS audiology patients when they are first prescribed hearing aids

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1. Introduction

The problem
• 12 million people have significant long term hearing loss [1]
• 355,000 adults are fitted with hearing aids each year via the NHS at a cost of £131 million.
• The non-use and infrequent use of NHS-prescribed hearing aids is high.

Research aims:
1. To co-create and refine text-message content with patients and audiologists
2. To gather in-depth feedback on usability, message content, language and framing.

The solution
• An NHS-approved text-messaging service. Implemented in over 100 NHS organisations.
• Text-messages are simple, convenient, requiring little effort to engage.
• Florence responds to patients in real time, providing information required to overcome common barriers exactly when they need it.

2. Intervention planning and optimisation

Although Florence has been used to help NHS patients self-manage many long-term conditions, it has not yet been used by people to help manage hearing loss. We worked in partnership with patients to coproduce a Florence intervention protocol for new hearing aid users, using:
✓ qualitative participatory techniques
✓ the Medical Research Council guidance for the development and evaluation of complex interventions [2]
✓ health behaviour theory [3]

The intervention is designed to address key barriers to hearing aid use by improving patients’ capability, opportunity and motivation to use hearing aid(s) when they are first prescribed.

3. Co-development and usability testing

Adults with hearing aids
• 15 participants, 3 workshops (2 online, 1 face-to-face)
• Aged between 37-74 years (mean = 61.75 years)
• Owned hearing aids between 3-58 years (mean = 13.78 years)

Audiologists
• 6 participants from across the UK
• 1 workshop (online)
• Professional experience = 3-20 years, (mean 12.6 years)

Usability testing
• Florence piloted with patients (n=5) to gather feedback on text-message content, language and framing via semi-structure interviews.

4. Next steps

Feasibility Study
➢ 16 month feasibility study with 90 new NHS hearing aid users across three NHS audiology sites
➢ Assessing recruitment and attrition rates
➢ Exploring the acceptability of study procedures by patients and clinicians

References
[1] RNID, 2020

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