Follow-on impact from memory screening in older adults attending NHS hearing aid assessment appointments: a pilot study

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1 Background

Hearing loss acquired in midlife is a significant risk factor for dementia. Memory is rarely addressed in hearing services, but many UK audiologists feel it would be useful to do so. We therefore set out to introduce a brief memory assessment in routine hearing aid appointments.

2 Aim

This study explores the impact of introducing a short memory assessment in routine hearing aid appointments at a community hospital in London.

3 Methodology

- Pilot study based at Edgware Community Hospital
- 20 patients aged >65 years

**Preparation**

Training for clinical audiologists to perform memory assessment

15 minutes extra time allocated

**Appointment procedure**

- History
- Memory assessments
- Discussion of memory scores
- Standard audiology assessments
- Discussion of audiology results
- Audiology management plan

**3-month follow-up phone call**

- Impact of memory assessment

3 Results

- Median age 80 years
- 14 (70%) attended alone
- 20 (100%) completed memory assessment
- 14 minutes for memory assessment + discussion
- Training 1 hour + 1 hour self-directed learning

**3-month telephone follow-up**

- All 20 contacted
- 10 with normal score did not contact GP
- 6 did not contact GP
- 4 contacted GP
- 2 had prior dementia diagnosis
- 4 did not have significant memory concerns
- 1 diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease
- 2 awaiting memory clinic referral
- 1 had GP consultation, decided memory clinic referral not needed

4 Conclusions

- Half of older adults attending hearing aid clinics fail a commonly used dementia screening tool (AD8). This result may have been affected by most patients attending alone and completing the tool which is designed to be informant based.
- Identifying a potential memory problem in older adults attending hearing aid clinics may help audiologists adjust their approach to hearing aid fitting to maximise uptake.
- Memory screening in older adults attending audiology clinics has the potential for early identification of dementia, enabling early intervention and better outcomes.

References


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