

Hearing Loss and Aging: The Role of Community-Based Screenings in Enhancing Quality of Life

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Scope of the Problem

- 1/3 of Americans between the ages of 65-74 have hearing problems
- 50% of individuals 85 + years have a hearing loss (approximately 4 million Americans)
- The incidence of hearing loss is likely to go up in the future because of environmental noise exposure and use of personal music players

Functional Impact of Hearing Loss

- Difficulty using the telephone
- Difficulty carrying on a conversation
- Missing important words

Psycho-Social Impact of Hearing Loss

- Embarrassment
- Social isolation
- Feeling paranoid
- May be viewed by others as having a cognitive loss, or being difficult

Signs of Hearing Loss

- Trouble on the phone
- Difficulty following conversations with many people
- Difficulty in noisy environments
- Turning up the TV volume
- Thinking that others are not talking clearly
- Difficulty hearing women and children

Age-Related Causes of Hearing Loss

- Presbycusis-Age related sensori-neural hearing loss due to changes/damage to the inner ear
 - Noise exposure
 - Illness
 - Some prescription drugs
 - Neuronal attrition

Conductive Hearing Loss

- **Wax accumulation**
- **Infection (middle ear)**
- **Abnormal bone growth in the ossicles**

The Importance of Community-Based-Hearing Screening

- **Early identification**
- **Early intervention**
- **More than 8 million Americans with hearing loss do not wear hearing aids**
- **67% of Americans age 65 and older with hearing loss do not use hearing aids**

Reasons for Not Using Hearing Aids

- **Cost**
- **Stigma**
- **Embarrassment**
- **Vanity**