

Dear Provider,

In the News: Dementia, Alzheimer's Disease & Hearing Health Care

Encourage your patients to have a baseline hearing test and treat hearing loss EARLY to stave off or slow down cognitive decline due to lack of stimulation caused by auditory deprivation.

M. Kathleen Pichora-Fuller reports that Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is progressive, degenerative, and is the most common form of dementia. She reports for those older than age 70 diagnosed with AD, AD is usually fatal within 10 years! Pichora-Fuller notes that dementia is more common in people with hearing loss, than in those with normal hearing. Indeed, the risk of developing dementia increases dramatically (two to five times greater) for those with hearing loss. Lin (2011) reported that for every **10 dB** of hearing loss greater than 25 HL, the risk of developing dementia increases by 10 percent!!

In light of the connection between age-related auditory and cognitive declines, questions are raised about what the mechanisms underlying the connection might be and if earlier or better hearing health care could **stave off or slow down dementia** (Lin et al., 2013; Pichora-Fuller, 2010). The popular "use it or lose it" view of cognitive aging has been supported by evidence that a range of lifestyle factors involving social, physical, or mental activity can help protect older adults from cognitive decline.

Such activity includes engagement in social leisure activities, physical exercise and/or eating a Mediterranean-type diet, or cognitive expertise such as being bilingual or a musician. One possibility is that the relationship between hearing loss and incident dementia is mediated by lifestyle factors. Because AD has become a dominant global public health concern, rigorous research is needed to investigate the possibility that hearing rehabilitation could help stave it off or slow it down (e.g., by preventing social withdrawal).

In summary, please refer your patients for a complete audiological evaluation (CAE) to aid us in early identification. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@goodsoundaudiology.com

Best Regards,

Tina Jessee, Au.D.