



*Provider Notes
December 2016*

Dear Provider

Hearing Loss is the invisible thief of a patient's Quality of Life. By the time a person is fit with amplification, years of hearing loss have gone untreated. Thousands of conversations were misinterpreted. Many relationships have been negatively impacted. Loneliness and isolation are being experienced. Cognitive function has possibly decreased. All of these potential effects caused by hearing loss can be reduced or even removed by a simple conversation with you, the patient's primary medical provider. The person your patient respects and depends on to improve their quality of life.

When a patient presents for their "Welcome to Medicare" visit for new beneficiaries many aspects of the patient's health are reviewed and documented. Unfortunately, the ones that are not visible such as hearing loss often go unaddressed. There may be no questions on the history form relating to hearing for the patient, or even more likely, the family to comment on. There may be no standard of care to provide a screening of hearing or recommendation of a baseline hearing evaluation with an Audiologist. It is likely due to the fact that "Screening for asymptomatic hearing loss in adults 50 and older has been assigned an "I" rating by the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force meaning the current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and arms of the service." This is so unfortunate! It also does not apply to those who are symptomatic for hearing loss which does recommend a objective hearing assessment. The need to determine if the

patient is experiencing "symptoms" of hearing loss is crucial.

This is important for so many and a little can go a long way to making a big difference in many people's lives. Hearing loss is a health concern and evidence has determined it is linked with: functional dependence, cognitive decline, social isolation, falls, poor physician-patient communication and even mortality. There are treatment options and you, as a primary healthcare provider, can make such a difference. Inquire about hearing ability with patient and family (family may be the only one to notice or admit it for the patient), provide screenings or recommendations for Audiological evaluations, and/or perhaps provide material for patients regarding treatment for hearing loss, whether it is mild or severe.

There are so many "unintended consequences" of neglecting a sense that is crucial to engagement with friends, family, co-worker's, health care providers, warning signals, sounds of life etc.!

As in all things, early detection is key and you are the gatekeeper to this detection. Thank you for providing the best healthcare for your patients.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at info@goodsoundaudiology.com

**Best Regards,
Valarie Streich, Au.D.**

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