

## **Auditory Rehabilitation from the Perspective of the Significant Other**

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**Objectives:** The success of a hearing-aid fitting is impacted by many factors including patient pre-use expectations regarding hearing-aid outcomes. Just as patient expectations impact the rehabilitation process; it is logical to assume that the expectations of the patient's spouse also may impact rehabilitation. This relationship has yet to be examined. The primary purposes of this study are: 1) to examine the relationship between spousal opinions regarding hearing aids on patient post-use satisfaction with hearing aids and 2) to assess the relative efficacy of different intervention strategies at addressing pre-use expectations with the ultimate aim of improving satisfaction with hearing aids.

**Plan:** One of the primary goals of this study is to examine and quantify the relationship between spousal opinions regarding hearing aids on patient post-use satisfaction with hearing aids. This goal will be accomplished by conducting a prospective, observational study in which pre-use expectations will be well-characterized and related to post-use satisfaction at 4-6 weeks. The second primary goal is to evaluate the effect of both enhanced patient-centered counseling (that includes both informational and psychosocial counseling) and spousal involvement on pre-use expectations of, and post-use satisfaction with, hearing aids. This second goal will be addressed by conducting a randomized controlled clinical trial.

**Methods:** This study will be completed in two phases. In Phase I, eighty-eight couples will undergo a comprehensive audiometric evaluation and complete a routine case-history form, a marital-satisfaction questionnaire, a questionnaire assessing independence at completing activities of daily living, a mental-status questionnaire, a hearing-aid outcome questionnaire, the pre-use expectations questionnaire, an interview, and the post-use satisfaction questionnaire. The pre-use expectation questionnaire will be completed prior to the partner with hearing loss receiving a hearing aid. The post-use questionnaire will be completed 4-6 weeks after the hearing aid is fit. Patients with hearing loss will also complete speech-recognition-in-noise testing. Structural equation modeling will be used to examine potential predictor variables on post-use satisfaction. In Phase II, eighty couples will be enlisted to participate in one of four experimental groups (20 couples each): 1) information-only counseling given to the patient; 2) information-only counseling given to the couple; 3) patient-centered counseling given to the patient; and 4) patient-centered counseling given to the couple. All subjects will complete an audiometric evaluation, a routine case-history form, a questionnaire assessing independence at completing activities of daily living, a mental-status questionnaire, a marital-satisfaction questionnaire, the pre-use expectations questionnaire, the post-use satisfaction questionnaire, a hearing-aid outcomes questionnaire, and an open-ended interview. The expectations questionnaire, the satisfaction questionnaire, and the hearing-aid outcomes questionnaire will be completed twice. Analyses of covariance will be conducted to test the main effects of counseling and spousal involvement on expectations and satisfaction.

**Finding to Date:** Data collection for Phase I is underway. There are no findings to report at this time.

**Clinical Relevance/Relevance to VA Mission:** Many VA patients are not satisfied with their hearing aids. This research will determine factors that may influence satisfaction, thereby improving rehabilitation outcomes.

**MeSH terms:** spouses, rehabilitation, hearing aids