

**Title: Hearing and Health Behavior Change****Principal Investigator:** Gabrielle Saunders, PhD

**Objectives.** Successful hearing aid rehabilitation depends to a large extent on people's beliefs about their hearing disability and hearing aids. Several models of Health Behavior Change (HBC) have been proposed to describe the link between beliefs and HBC. Two models will be examined in this study: the Health Belief Model (HBM) (Rosenstock 1966) and the Transtheoretical Model (TTM) of Prochaska & DiClemente; (1984). According to the HBM, an individual's motivation to avoid a negative health outcome is a function of the perceived threat of that outcome and the perceived ease with which that outcome can be avoided. Alternatively, the TTM focuses on an individual's readiness to change. This project will prospectively study HBC in adults using the HBM and the TTM as the theoretical framework.

**Research Plan.** This is a single-site, study examining the utility of the HBM and the TTM as predictors of HBC in adults seeking hearing help for the first time. Three hundred and fifty individuals will be enrolled after they have made an appointment for a hearing test at a participating clinic. They will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires before their hearing evaluation, and then again 6-months later.

**Methods.** Participants will be recruited just prior to attending a scheduled appointment for a hearing test. Participants will complete questionnaires that assess their HBM and TTM profiles, as well as their self-reported hearing difficulties. Approximately six months later, participants will complete a second set of these questionnaires, along with hearing aid outcome questionnaires if they have acquired hearing aids in the intervening six-month period.

**Findings to Date.** None to report as this study has not yet begun.

**Relevance to VA's Mission.** Hearing loss is the second most common service-connected disability among Veterans. Despite the fact that untreated hearing loss can lead to increased risks of depression, cognitive decline, and reduced quality of life, many individuals who would benefit from hearing rehabilitation chose not to pursue it. A better understanding of the factors that influence these hearing health behaviors will lead to interventions for Veterans that can increase uptake of hearing rehabilitation services.

MeSH terms: hearing loss, rehabilitation, hearing aids, health behavior, Attitude to Health