

Enhancing Communication for Frail Older Patients in Acute Care with Hearing Impairment Using the AudiMed® Communicator Device

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Objectives

Enhancing communication between hospital staff and frail older patients with hearing impairment, particularly in the Emergency Department (ED) and acute care settings, will improve patients' communication skills, enhance patient outcomes and satisfaction, and uphold patient dignity and respect. It will also help streamline workflow efficiency and understanding among clinical and non-clinical staff.

Background

Globally, hearing loss affects over 80% of adults aged 80 years and older and is a mid-life risk factor for dementia. Frail older patients presenting to the hospital with hearing impairment are especially vulnerable to adverse health outcomes. In acute care settings like the ED and medical wards, these patients often encounter significant communication challenges, which can lead to serious consequences. Due to their hearing difficulties, they may be perceived as confused, resulting in misdiagnosis or inappropriate treatment. Additionally, these patients often experiencing a loss of control, increased fear, anxiety, and misunderstanding of their care plan. Such communication breakdowns compromise patient dignity, leading to heightened stress, lower satisfaction, and ultimately worse health outcomes like delirium, increased length of stays.

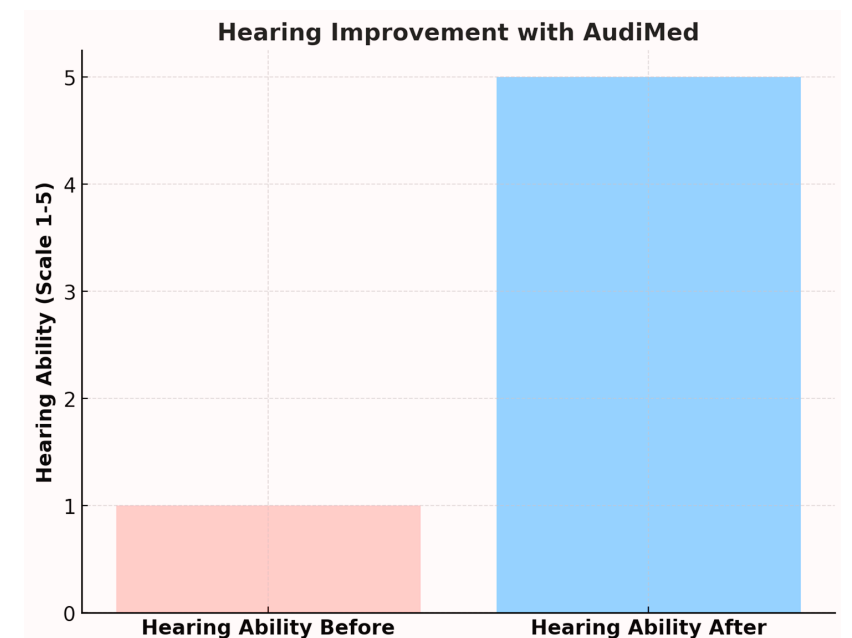
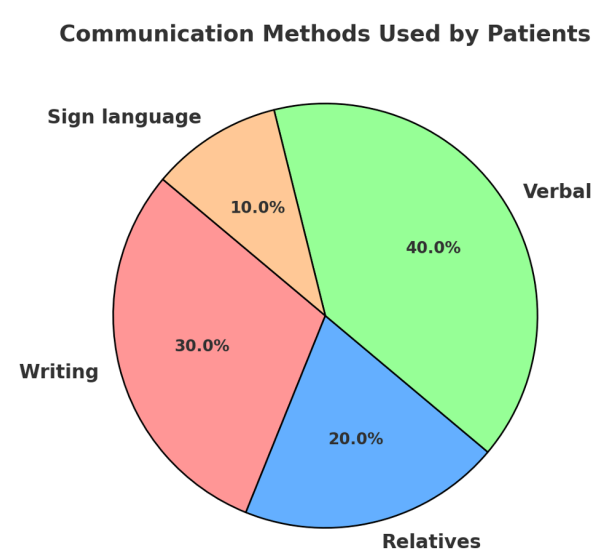
Methodology

Data was collected from ten randomly selected participants aged 75 years and older with hearing impairments who were admitted to the Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) Frailty unit from the ED. Each patient underwent an initial assessment using a questionnaire to evaluate their hearing and communication challenges.

AudiMed Communicator 2, a lightweight stetoclip with a built-in microphone and amplifier, was introduced to enhance communication. After using the device, participants completed a follow-up questionnaire assessing its impact. Comparing pre- and post-intervention data provided insights into the device's effectiveness in improving communication between patients and healthcare professionals.

Results

The image shows the communication methods staff and patients used, including alternative techniques. Most of the patients in this study didn't have properly functioning hearing aids, making interactions with healthcare providers even more challenging. After introducing the AudiMed communication device, every patient saw a dramatic improvement in their ability to hear and engage with their care team. All participants rated their hearing ability as 5/5 and preferred using the device. They expressed relief and satisfaction, feeling more included in their care and conversations.



Patient feedback: "Instead of repeating myself or pretending to understand, I could actually hear and respond properly using this device. It made a difference"

Conclusion

Poor communication can impact older adults' well-being and treatment outcomes in hospital settings, especially in the ED and medical wards. AudiMed bridged this gap, allowing patients to hear more clearly, reducing stress, and helping them actively participate in their care.

Patients felt more empowered, valued, and respected. By improving communication, AudiMed made care delivery smoother and more efficient and enhanced their overall quality of life, ensuring they felt heard—literally and figuratively. We recommend broadening the application of Audimed for frail elderly patients with hearing impairment in acute care settings.

References

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