

The effects of hearing loss on the spouse (i.e., the SO)

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Audiological Rehabilitation Services

Traditionally, rehabilitation services provided by audiologists have focused on the person with HL

- Amplification
- Auditory training
- Speechreading
- Speech communication strategies
- Psychosocial consequences
- Vocational rehabilitation

Audiological Rehabilitation Services

In the 80s:

A recognition that hearing loss impacts communication

Spouses of persons with HL can facilitate communication if they use good strategies

- the notion of the spouse (or significant other: SO) as a helper in communication

How to help person with HL minimize the effects of HL

Effects of HL on the spouse

Late 80s and early 90s

A recognition that there is an effect of hearing loss on the spouse/SO (mainly spouses of male adults with HL)

HL is a handicap. It has an effect on all the people involved in a given activity

Spouses report:

- **Reduced quality of interactions (frustration)**
- **We don't go out anymore**
- **I have become my husbands hearing aids**

Effects of HL on the spouse

Brooks (2001): Interviewed people with HL and their spouse. He found that...

SO have as much difficulty adjusting to HL than the person with HL

- **One on one conversations**
- **Group conversations**
- **Watching television**

Effects of HL on the spouse

Stephen et al., (1995): 52 older adults and their spouse

SO reported more problems with psychosocial issues and spoken communication compared to those listed by their partner with HL

- need to repeat frequently
- volume of TV and radio
- responding for the other in many situations (being the interpreter)

Effects of HL on the spouse

Stark and Hickson (2004):

93 individuals with HI and 78 SO

Quality of life (of the spouse) improved after partner got hearing aids:

- **Fewer repetitions**
- **TV less loud**
- **Less difficulty when it is noisy**
- **Less frustration**

Effects of HL on the spouse

Anderson and Noble (2005):

- Female spouses are, more likely to signal their distress than do male spouses
- Female spouses take greater responsibility for maintaining couple's communication and accommodating their male partner's with HL than male spouses.

Scarinci, N., Worrall, L., & Hickson, L.
(2008). The effect of hearing impairment in
older people on the spouse. *International
Journal of audiology*, 47(3), 141-151.

Effects of HL on the spouse

Purpose:

- Describe, *from the perspective of the spouse*, their experiences of being married to someone with HL
- Describe the effects of HL on the couples communication and relationship

Goal of Presentation

What are the effects of HL on the Spouse (SO)?

What are the effects of HL on the adult-children of older adults with HL?

What are the implications for AR services?

The main themes/categories of comments:

1. The effects of HL on the spouses **everyday life activities**
2. The spouses **need to constantly adapt** to their partners
3. The effect of acceptance (of the HL) **by the person with HL** and the spouse

BROAD RANGING EFFECTS OF HEARING LOSS ON THE SPOUSES EVERYDAY LIFE ACTIVITIES

Almost all activities are affected by the partner's HL

- The effects on communication
- The effect on everyday activities
- The effects on emotions
- The effects on the relationship
- The effects on social activities

The effect on everyday life activities

The effects of HL on communication

Reduction in the amount of conversations:

- We don't talk a lot
- Trivial remarks aren't worth the effort
- No chit-chat (e.g., talking about the weather)
- I have to draw her attention whereas before you just sort of chatter away at it and not even worry
- We can't have secrets
- Constant repetition is tiring and annoying
- If I have to repeat the same thing 3 or 4 times I might get a bit frustrated

The effects on everyday activities

The effects of HL on activities

Can you reduce the level of the TV

- Important impact of the volume of the television on their daily functioning and emotions
- Therefore we can't watch TV together (we go to separate rooms)

The effects on everyday activities

The effects of HL on activities

Can't use the telephone effectively

- I have to make important calls for him/her/us
- Never hears the phone so I'm the answering service in our house

The effects on everyday activities

The effects of HL on activities

Concerned about safety issue

- Does he/she hear the traffic when he is walking on busy and noisy streets
- Would he/she hear the smoke alarm if he was sleeping

The effect on emotions

- It is frustrating at times.. it's bothersome... it's annoying...it's just a bit of a nuisance – a nuisance because you've gotta go through the rigamarole of saying: ' What did I say?'
- It (the HL) affected me quite a bit but mainly it's affected how I feel probably (*how I feel about my SO...*)

The effect on emotions

- It's frustrating for me (multiple repetitions)
- It's embarrassing (when there is an inappropriate response or when others make fun of him/her; others must think that I over-protect him/her)
- I just feel sorry for her/him (sympathy)

The effect of HL on relationship

- We didn't use to have so many arguments
- It kills the moment (referring to moments of intimacy, including physical relationships)

The effect of HL on relationship

- Sometimes you retract and decide to do things alone
- Try not to make a big issue of it (referring to how the HL influences the relationship)
- One of the reasons for the negative effect on the relationship is the residual effects of the tension over the HL

The effect of HL on relationship

- The inability to 'whisper sweet nothings' to the partner
- It can/may/could become a cause of divorce!

The effect is that significant!

The effects on social activities

In one word.... *'We just stay home'*

- Reduction in frequency of going out
- Too much noise (too many people)
- Let's wait till the video comes out (difficulties at movies and theatres)
- Others make fun of the hearing loss (including family members).. it make the spouse feel uncomfortable

So – Concerning the effects of HL

- On communication
- On everyday activities
- On emotions
- On the relationship
- On social activities

Comments?

In Argentina, do spouses report the same things?

2. CONSTANTLY ADAPTING TO HL

Need to constantly use communication strategies

- I try to position myself so he/she can read my lips when I speak
- I am aware that I have to speak loudly (and clearly) so he/she can hear me
- Sometime I have to use notes
- I like to be near him/her (in case I have to interpret what he/she didn't hear)
- I assume control of the situations
- Sometimes I answer for him/her

CONSTANTLY ADAPTING TO HL

Having to think about HL all the time

- Especially in relation to strategy usage
- In everyday life
- Being aware of their partners difficulties in different social situations.

CONSTANTLY ADAPTING TO HL

Protecting the partner with HL

- The need to **'look out for'** or **'protect'** their partner with HL during group conversations in order to protect them from embarrassing situations or situations where they have misinterpreted the conversation and could potentially **'say the wrong thing'**

CONSTANTLY ADAPTING TO HL

Imbalance of the adjustment

The SO's feel that they (the one without the HL) has done most of the adapting to the HL

- 'He/she just carries on his own sweet way and doesn't worry about anybody else and just expects everybody else to just take it in'
- The spouse has to make all the effort in conversation (to make sure the partner understands)

CONSTANTLY ADAPTING TO HL

Accepting the situation as it is

- Resignation...
 - I've learned to live with it
 - We have been together for a long time.. that's just the way it is.

So – concerning constantly adapting to HL

- Need to constantly use communication strategies
- Having to think about HL all the time
- Protecting the partner with HL
- Imbalance of the adjustment
- Accepting the situation as it is

In Argentina do spouses report the same things? Are you surprised?

EFFECT OF ACCEPTANCE ON THE SPOUSE

Major themes..

- Denial on the part of the partner with HL
- Denial of the HL on the part of the spouse
- The effect of acceptance on the spouse
- The centrality of hearing aids

EFFECT OF ACCEPTANCE ON THE SPOUSE

DENIAL ON THE PART OF THE PARTNER with HL

- The person with a HL has a tendency to deny their HL
- The defence has gotten worse
 - Blaming the difficulties to external factors
 - Wax
 - The others mumble
- Not acknowledging the HL adds to the frustration of the spouse.

EFFECT OF ACCEPTANCE ON THE SPOUSE

Denial on the part of the spouse

- Initially I didn't think that his/her hearing was that bad because some times he/she seem to understand without any difficulty
- It's really my fault any way.. I talk to him/her when he/she can't see me.. I have a really soft voice

EFFECT OF ACCEPTANCE ON THE SPOUSE

Once they perceived that their partner with HL had accepted his/her HL there was a subsequent positive effect on the spouse (i.e., less frustration)

- It makes my adaptation easier
- I've become more tolerant of her/her problems
- 'it makes my adaptation easier in as much as there's no arguments about it. These little things happen and there's a reason for it and you accept it and just carry on.

EFFECT OF ACCEPTANCE ON THE SPOUSE

THE CENTRALITY OF HEARING AIDS

- When he/she has the hearing aids in, it makes it easier for me
- I keep harping on about him/her not wearing the hearing aids
- I've given up encouraging him/her to wear the aids.

So – concerning the EFFECT OF ACCEPTANCE ON THE SPOUSE

- Denial on the part of the partner with HL
- Denial of the HL on the part of the spouse
- The effect of acceptance on the spouse
- The centrality of hearing aids

Comments on the effect of acceptance on the spouse?

The effects of HL on the spouse

Finally...

**ARE THERE SOME BENEFITS (something positive)
ABOUT BEING THE PARTNER OF SOMEONE WITH
A HEARING LOSS?**

**Are there benefits concerning your life as a
couple**

Comments.....

The effects of HL on the spouse

Benefits... something positive

- I think in one respect it's had a favourable impact in as much as that it's made us a bit more aware of each other
- It tended to bring us closer together really because of it
- I am less shy in public
- I am able assert myself more (participate more fully) in conversations than I was before

The effects of HL on the spouse

Benefits... something positive

I have met some wonderful people and made many friends by accompanying him/her to meetings!



Letter to the Editor

Significant others of patients with hearing and balance disorders report positive experiencesIlmari Pyykkö*, Vinaya K. C. Manchaiah^{†,‡}, Erna Kentala[§] & Hilla Levo[§]**Table 1.** Positive experiences reported by significant others of people with hearing and balance disorders.

<i>Disorder</i>	<i>Main themes of positive experiences</i>
Hearing loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal development (e.g., increased patience and tolerance, increased awareness of the problem) • Improved relationship (e.g., humour, increased time spent with partner)
Balance disorder (i.e., Ménière's disorder)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved relationships • Acceptance and positive attitude • Perspectives on Ménière's disorder • Treatment-related benefits • Information and support received



***Thank you for your
time
... and your interest***

