

California Health Improvement Project (CHIP)

Improving patient-provider communication for hearing-impaired adults through use of personal amplifiers in clinical settings

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Problem Statement and Underlying Causes

Today 70% of adults over the age of 70 have some degree of hearing loss that impairs communication.

Hearing loss is a barrier to communication and can impact health outcomes.

Patients who cannot hear well in a health care environment feel disengaged and dissatisfied with their care. The impacts include:

- Decreased adherence to care plan
- Repeat visits to providers
- Increased Health care costs

Communication needs of hearing-impaired individuals can be easily managed in a clinical setting by the use of personal amplifiers.

Project Description

This project will develop an implementation kit that will enable clinics serving patients 65 and older to provide personal amplifiers to their hearing-impaired patients so they can hear better during the clinic visit.

Goal and Objectives

Goal: Improve communication between providers and hearing-impaired adults in clinical settings.

Output-oriented Objective:

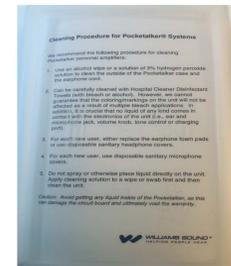
- In the first year of the project an implementation kit for amplifier use by clinics will be developed that will include a training program for providers and amplifiers for use in clinic.
- By September 2015, providers and staff in five Bay area clinics providing geriatric care participate in a pilot project and will be trained to implement amplifiers in their clinical settings to patients who need hearing assistance.

Outcome-oriented Objective: by December 2015, all five bay area clinics participating in the study will establish a permanent protocol for amplifier use in their clinics.

Outputs & Outcomes

The Implementation tool kit consists of:

- A PowerPoint deck of 8 slides on how to implement amplifiers in the clinic including workflow options.
- Two clear boxes with amplifiers and headphone covers and cleaning instructions.



- Instructions manual for use and troubleshooting.
- Signage stating the availability of the personal amplifiers for patients.



- Initially clinics start with one or two devices, they can request more after a 6 week trial to increase number of amplifiers in clinic.

Clinics currently implementing amplifiers

- San Mateo County Medical Center
 - Ron Robinson Senior Care Center: 12 units
- Alameda County Health System
 - Geriatric Care Clinic: 2 units
- Stanford Health Clinics: 8 units
- Dugoni Dental School
 - Student doctor training: 5 units
- Contra Costa County Health Services
 - West County Health Center: 3 units

Sample feedback from providers

- "I use it with every new patient and it has encouraged families to get hearing aids or amplifiers for their loved ones" - Dr. Susan Joseph, San Mateo Medical Center
- "This amplifier is more effective than our last one.... the feature with the ear covers also increases hygiene" - Dr. Diana Jao, San Mateo Medical Center
- "It has been wonderful for our patients... They have been really happy" - Dr Evan Seevak, Alameda County Health System

Lessons Learned

Clinics support the principle of providing amplifiers to their patients, and need a well developed implementation design that includes workflow for implementation.

Implementation of a project of this nature involves buy in from all the providers and front line staff and has to be custom designed to meet the needs of each clinic.

Three Phases can be identified for a successful project:

- Phase I : Education and Training of providers and Medical staff.
- Phase II: Customized Implementation of amplifiers in each clinic.
- Phase III: Provider and Patient satisfaction Measures.

Improving communication for hearing-impaired adults are covered by best practices of JCAHO and ADA , however they are not currently mandatory for Clinic and Hospital settings.

Large scale implementation of the devices would require by policy changes that would mandate the use of amplifiers by clinics serving the over 65 age group.

About My Organization

University of the Pacific's mission is to provide a superior, student-centered learning experience integrating liberal arts and professional education and preparing individuals for lasting achievement and responsible leadership in their careers and communities.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Williams Sound for providing the amplifiers used in this project.

I would also like to thanks all the clinics who took this journey with me.

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Contact Me

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