

## Dealing with Hearing Loss: A Qualitative Exploration of Adult Children of Parents with Hearing Impairment.

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## Questions



- How has the hearing impairment impacted the relationship and the communication between the adult child and his/her parent?
- How has parent's hearing impairment impacted adult child's quality of life?
  - See poster by Karah Miller
- What are the adult child's beliefs about the audiologic rehabilitation process?

## Thank You!

- Ida Institute
- Oticon Foundation



## Participants



- 12 children of parents with hearing loss
  - 22 to 58 years of age (x = 46)
  - 8 female
  - 1 lived with parent, 6 under an hour distance
  - 7 spent time with parent at least 1 x week
- 12 parents with hearing loss
  - 58 to 89 years of age (x = 77)
  - 6 female
  - All acquired hearing loss as adult
  - All were hearing aid owners

## Hearing Loss = Communication Loss

- Big impact on Communication Partners
- Research has investigated the impact of Hearing Loss on Spouses
  - Brooks et al 2001; Hallberg 1999; Hallam et al 2008; Scarinci et al 2008; Stephens et al 2005
- No previous research has focused on adult children



## Qualitative Research

- Interviews 30 minutes to 1 hour
- Interview guide
  - How has your parent's hearing loss affected your relationship with your parent?
  - How has your parent's hearing loss affected your communication with your parent?
  - Who took action which resulted in your parent seeking help for his/her hearing problem? (what was your role?)
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
  - An inductive approach to discover themes and sub-themes in the data (Smith et al 1999)

Smith, J. A., Jarman, M., Osborn, M. (1999). Doing interpretative phenomenological analysis. In M. Murray & K. Chamberlain (Eds.), Qualitative Health Psychology: Theories and Methods (pp. 218-240). London: Sage

Loss

Care & Caregiving

Uncertainty

Effort & Work

Withdrawal, Isolation & Avoidance

Speaking Loudly & Yelling

**Family Relationships**

- Who we were as a family (before the Hearing Impairment)
- Who we are now as a family
- The way a family should be
  - Adult Child & Parent with HI
  - Spousal Relationships
  - Siblings
  - Grandchildren
- **Communication**
  - Communication Strategies
  - Communication Problems

**Uncertainty**

- Is it Hearing Impairment or is it....?
- Recognizing hearing loss
- As an explanation for parent's behavior
- Figuring out parent's hearing loss and communication
- Why won't s/he wear his/her hearing aids?

"It was more of just over the years I would start conversations with her with her back turned and she would turn around and, it was almost like she was just ignoring me"

"It's hard to separate the cognitive from the hearing"

"Maybe if [the hearing aids] were permanently put into her ears, it wouldn't be a problem, but I think this in and out ... I don't know if she doesn't want people to know that she doesn't hear and she feels self conscious about it. I don't know if that's the reason."

**Loss of.....**

- Parent (who s/he was before the hearing impairment)
  - Relationship
- Everyday communication
- Shared activities
- Spontaneity in conversation/relationship
- Intimacy/ privacy

"We are just like two people going someplace, we are not engaging, and that's not the way it was."

"The hearing loss has been hard, because I used to say a lot of things to my Dad under my breath (if I was close to him) because we both have this wicked sense of humor and he would get it. And I didn't want my mother to hear what I was saying. So that's gone."

**Effort, Work & Concentration**

- Effective communication requires effort (by PHL or CP)
- Effort (by PHL or CP) improves communication
- Parent can choose if s/he wants to listen
- Less conversation now...it's just too much work

"I know she's not making the active effort to hear me. But if you are at a disadvantage already of the fact that it's not easy to hear somebody, I can see where it would get hard to constantly make a conscious effort."

"[I have to repeat myself] Not just once, not three times, it just starts to wear on you and then you just don't want to say anything. It's like, I don't want to have a conversation, I'm done, I'm tired of trying to explain everything to you."

**Care & Caregiving**

- Responsibility for overseeing (hearing) healthcare
- Responsibility for parent's quality of life
- Role in audiologic rehabilitation (including HA use)
- Impact of hearing impairment on parent's need for caregiving

"I sort of monitor group activity if I'm around to make sure that I can sense if she is getting it or not, or is engaged or not, or is involved or not, and gage her sense of wellbeing or not depending on how she feels about what's going on around her."

"Because she's getting a little more forgetful and she's got the hearing problem we know she can't really take care of herself as well as she did"

**Withdrawal, Isolation & Avoidance**

- Withdrawal from groups, activities, and family
- Impact of withdrawal on relationships

"We didn't ignore him but there were times when we kind of talked over him and it was fine because it was not that we were keeping secrets but it was, you know, easier not to involve him in a conversation. And, in a way, so we kind of took advantage of that he wasn't hearing quite so well."

"It's much more difficult for her to interact with us, so it's almost not worthwhile to bring her out and have her come visit because she's not really participating."

### Speaking Loudly & Yelling

- Discomfort with speaking loudly
- My speaking loudly can be misinterpreted as yelling
- I am not supposed to yell at my parent
- Uneasiness about yelling at parent
  - Guilt
  - Frustration
  - Embarrassment

"It's hard to go places, it's hard for me because I have to raise my voice and I'm kind of self conscious about other people hearing what I'm saying."

"I speak louder because I'm trying to get her to hear me. And, then, she thinks I'm yelling at her and then she gets angry with me and then it just escalates and then sometimes either I get angry with her or I just completely just shut down. I just drop the whole subject and then there is silence."

### Beliefs about the AR Process

- AR & HA Decisions
  - Not as involved in the process as we expected
- Communication Strategies
  - Strategies that Adult Child uses
  - Strategies that Parent uses
- Communication Problems
- Hearing aid use and non-use

### Conclusions

- Many themes similar to those reported in literature for spouses of people with hearing loss
  - Surprised about some of the similarities- for example: Intimacy
- Quite a bit of frustration and sadness
  - Related to loss, uncertainty, withdrawal, communication problems
- Differences in perceptions across siblings
  - Two sisters: described very different communication strategies/ communication problems
- Importance of including adult children in AR process when possible