

PERCEIVED HEALTH CARE DISCRIMINATION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ADULTS PRIOR TO AND DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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BACKGROUND

- Approximately 37.5 million (15%) of the US adults have some level of hearing loss^{1,2}.
- Estimated 30.0 million with bilateral hearing loss^{1,2}.
- About 18.1 million individuals with unilateral hearing loss^{1,2}.
- As people age, the incidence of hearing loss increases.
- Greater functional disability associated with older hearing impaired adults^{3,4}.
- Adults with hearing loss also performed lower on the Activity of Daily Living^{3,4}.
- d/HH reported lower satisfaction with health care quality and access^{3,4}.
- Contradictory results make it challenging to understand correlations.

STUDY AIMS

This study will investigate the relationship between severity of hearing and perceived health care discrimination prior to and during the time of COVID-19.

The overall goal of this project is to inform Healthcare providers (HCP) and policymakers regarding barriers to health care for deaf and hard of hearing (d/HH) individuals. Findings will assist HCP in providing accommodations and adaptations with the use of Personal protective equipment (PPE) to best meet the needs of d/HH individuals during the evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODS

This cross-sectional study focuses on d/HH English language using adults living in the U.S. with varied levels of hearing loss. Participants (target enrollment of approximately 100 adults) will be recruited through d/HH Facebook and community organizations.

Survey was available in English and Signed Exact English (a language system commonly used by deaf and hard of hearing individuals).

Population: deaf and hard of hearing (non-culturally deaf) adults in the US including but not limited to cochlear implant, hearing aid users, ASL and English users with varied levels of hearing loss.

PHASE 1 DATA COLLECTION

Phase 1 inclusion criteria included:

- English users
- Residing in the US
- Over 18 years old

Participants were recruited through social media and deaf and hard of hearing organizations throughout the US.

PHASE 2 DATA COLLECTION

Phase 2 inclusion criteria includes:

- English or Spanish language user
- Residing in the US
- Over 18 years old

Second phase of recruitment will take place through Prolific, a third party crowd sourcing site.

RESULTS

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we are unable to present results at this time.

NEXT STEPS

- We will continue to collect data online.
- Future analysis will investigate the role of health care provider empathy and preferred communication modality as moderators in the relationship between severity of hearing loss and perceived health care discrimination.

IMPACT

Experiences in health care can impact health care seeking behaviors. When patients have negative health care experiences, it can create health care avoidant behaviors and exacerbate any pre-existing health conditions the patient might already have.

Results of this study also informs medical practice and policies regarding the variables that impact patient-provider communication and interactions.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research will focus on provider cultural competency regarding addressing communication barriers between deaf and hard of hearing patients. Future research could also benefit from exploring race and gender as a moderator in the relationship between severity of hearing loss and perceived health care discrimination.

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