The Impact of Hearing Loss On Life

The CEO of VitaSound Audio Inc. feels we should learn more about hearing loss because this condition takes away the capacity to communicate and reduces social interaction between people. In addition, studies have shown that untreated hearing loss can lead to increasing isolation, depression, and even dementia.

June 21, 2013 By Gora Ganguli

Hearing loss is an ever-growing problem that robs people of their quality of life. Because it takes away the capacity to communicate and reduces social interaction between people, studies have shown that untreated loss leads to increasing isolation, depression, and even dementia. Always thought of as an “elderly person’s problem” it is, in fact, occurring at much earlier stages of life than ever before, due primarily to the ever-increasing noise levels of modern day life and the pervasive use of portable audio devices like phones and music players. New studies are showing occurrence of hearing loss in average people in their early 20s, for the first time in recorded history. Studies have also shown that those in the workplace with hearing loss tend to earn less than those with similar qualifications who have normal hearing. As the onset of hearing loss occurs in younger and younger people, the consequences for society will be economic as well as social and mental health related.

A little-known fact about hearing loss is that left untreated, it causes auditory functions of the brain to atrophy. Sounds that are not heard, over a prolonged period, results in the loss of “sound vocabulary” in the brain. That is, the brain eventually forgets the association of that sound with the source. For example, when we don’t hear the high-pitched chirping of birds because we have a hearing loss in the high frequencies, we will eventually forget that sound and its source. If later in life, hearing devices are used, what was once recognizable as birds chirping is no longer recognizable and simply sounds like annoying noise. This is one of the main reasons many people have difficulty in adapting to hearing aids if the loss is untreated for long periods.

Despite these significant impacts on life, less than a quarter of the people that could benefit from hearing devices use them. The reasons are mainly about money and stigma. The prices of hearing aids range from $4,000 to over $7,000 a pair, certainly a significant purchase decision, especially for someone on fixed income. Having been marketed for decades to seniors, because most hearing loss was seen to be age-related, it is natural that hearing aids have become synonymous with aging and, hence, a stigma for people who are experiencing hearing loss at a much younger

age due to environmental factors (like too many rock concerts!). This new generation of the hearing impaired are averse to devices that resemble hearing aids.

The effects of the early stages of hearing loss are seen (or heard!) in the increasingly louder volume settings of television, much to the chagrin of other family members; difficulty in conversing over the phone; enjoying music; and difficulty in following conversations in noisy social environments like restaurants. Cost and stigma may still dissuade people from purchasing hearing aids for these situations, but assistive devices are certainly worth considering. At a fraction of the cost of hearing aids and a completely different look and style, VitaSound's Personal Audio Enhancer is a great solution for the typical hearing difficulties and may just help to preserve the brain's "sound vocabulary" that much longer.

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http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/Hearingloss-untreated-devices-24116-3274