

Hearing Loss and Dementia Study

A large French scientific study, which has followed nearly 3,800 people for a 25-years period, has found that seniors and elderly who admit having a hearing loss but do not use hearing aids are at a much higher risk of dementia and disability than people with a hearing loss using hearing aids or people with normal hearing.

The use of hearing aids eliminated the increased risk of both dementia and disability, according to the study. For people using hearing aids, there was no higher risk compared with people reporting normal hearing.

Dementia

The study found that people who had a hearing loss but did not use hearing aids had a significantly higher risk of developing dementia than people with normal hearing or those with a hearing loss using hearing aids. The risk increased by 21% if you had a hearing loss but did not use hearing aids. However, using hearing aids, there was no higher risk compared with people reporting no hearing loss.

Disability

An untreated hearing loss also increased the risk of disability, according to the study. In the study among people with hearing loss who did not use hearing aids, there was an increased hazard risk of 28% in activities related to daily living such as e.g. bathing and dressing and a 13% increased hazard risk when it came to instrumental activities such as telephone use, managing medication and money, shopping and transportation. Persons with a hearing loss who used hearing aids had no increased risk compared with those reporting no hearing loss.

Depression

Among men reporting hearing loss but not using hearing aids, the study found that there was a much higher risk (43%) of developing depressive symptoms than for people without hearing loss or people who used hearing aids. The study found no increased risk of depression in women.

Earlier findings

Earlier findings using the same data and population has shown that self-reported hearing loss is associated with accelerated cognitive decline in elderly adults and that the use of hearing aids almost eliminates this cognitive decline.

About the study

The findings are based on a French epidemiological study (The PAQUID Study) with a sample of 3,777 individuals aged 65 or older who had been followed for up to 25 years. The study is led by Professor H el ene Amieva.

The study "Death, Depression, Disability and Dementia associated with self-reported Hearing Problems: A-25-year Study" was published in Journals of Gerontology: Medical Sciences in January 2018.