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# Using hearing and occupational science to advance opportunities for persons with hearing loss at work and in the community

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## Using an Interdisciplinary Approach to Advance Opportunities for Persons with Hearing Loss to Participate in Work and in Community Activities

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### DEVELOPING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

STEP1 Define and acknowledge that a complex participation problem exists:

*People with hearing loss withdraw from work and social/community activities prematurely that in turn leads to isolation, depression and decreased wellbeing<sup>1,2</sup>.*

STEP 2 Recognize the need for multiple knowledge bases to address complex participation problems

STEP 3 Use a post modern orientation to question traditional understandings and limitations of why the use of hearing technologies alone do not solve the complexity of participation problems. To explore other sources of the constraints and challenges that lead to marginalization of persons with hearing loss. To question what it is that as health professionals we have overlooked and why, and then to examine the taken for granted assumptions about our views and approaches to hearing loss and the impact on participation in different settings.<sup>3</sup>

STEP 4 Identify theoretical perspectives coherent with unravelling the sources of problems and taken for granted assumptions of the problem – for this complex participation problem we identified the need to draw upon occupational science knowledge and hearing science and universal design principles in examining what is needed to enable persons with hearing loss to stay in the workplace and to continue to participate in community activities in public places.

### USING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH



#### Occupational Science Perspectives

Identified the need to understand hearing demands of occupations and how demands place expectations for performance and productivity in the workplace. Identify the social and contextual demands for hearing in the workplace and in community activities such as banking or shopping or attending social events.

#### Hearing Science Perspectives

Identified the need to understand hearing sensory resources of the person in interacting and communicating with others in the midst of performing activities in different contexts.

#### Human Factors Universal Design Principles

Identified the need to consider ways to develop hearing accessibility across different places and across a range of hearing capacities.

### TARGETING NEW DIRECTIONS AND ADVANCING OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE AVENUES FOR PARTICIPATION FOR PERSONS WITH HEARING LOSS

Health care professionals, occupational therapists, audiologists, occupational health nurses and accessibility professionals require better assessment tools. They require a common discourse to examine hearing demands and resources of occupations as well as ways to evaluate contexts to enhance accessibility and the use of technologies. This need for better tools was identified as the first area of focus in our research towards creating change. We identified the need for ways to evaluate hearing demands and personal resources needed to identify opportunities for adapting environments, accommodating work processes and improving universal design of environments for hearing for all. As a result new directions through interdisciplinary research in hearing occupations are being explored.



#### Study 1: Developed the Universal Design Guideline for Hearing

Fok, D., Shaw, L., Jennings, M., and Cheesman, M. (2009). Towards a comprehensive approach for managing transitions of older workers with hearing loss. *WORK*, 32, 365-376.

Fok, D., Shaw, L., Jennings, M.B., and Cheesman, M. Universal accessibility and usability for hearing: Considerations for design. CAA Annual Conference, The Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, 2007.



#### Study 2: Developed an Evaluation of Hearing Demands of Occupations and Hearing Resources of the Person

Jennings, M., Shaw, L., Frost, L., Kudrak, A. and Hoggins, H. (2010). Evaluating hearing demands and resources in the workplace. *Work*, 26, 101-112.

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1. Lockley, K., Jennings, M., Shaw, L. (2010) Exploring Hearing Aid Use in Older Women through Narratives. *International Journal of Audiology*, 49 542-549.
2. Jennings, M.B., and Shaw, L. (2009). Impact of hearing loss in the workplace: Raising questions about partnerships with professionals. *WORK*, 30, 289-296.
3. Jennings, M.B., Shaw, L., Hodgins, H., Kuchiar, D.A., and Poost-Foroosh Bastaghwa, L. Older workers with hearing loss: How do audiologists and occupational therapists assess and make recommendations about workplace accommodations? *Canadian Academy of Audiology Conference*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2008.

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