

Deaf Awareness, Accessibility and Communication in the NHS

Why is this work needed?

Few healthcare professionals receive training in deaf awareness, and inadequate treatment of hearing loss is estimated to cost the NHS £30million/year. Barriers to communication mean people with hearing loss are less likely to seek healthcare, have poorer access to health information, and consequently experience adverse health outcomes. Creating a culture of deaf awareness, accessibility and communication in the NHS is therefore a much-needed healthcare priority.

Action Statement

The first step in this work is a national survey to collect information from people with hearing loss and their parent/carers, to define the problem. Our survey, designed by a multidisciplinary team of colleagues and patient advocates, has received favourable ethical approval from the University of Cambridge, and already has over 600 responses. We are currently producing a BSL version of the survey, for accessibility to the Deaf community. The results of the survey will be analysed by a team of experts in qualitative and quantitative methods, to identify and prioritise research priorities regarding hearing loss awareness and used to inform the production of educational resources to create a culture of deaf awareness, accessibility, and better communication.

Impact of this research

This long-term impact of this work will be to reduce health inequalities and barriers to communication for people with hearing loss. In the immediate future, the identification and prioritisation of research themes on this topic will lead to the development of our collaborative, inter-disciplinary research team, and applications for funding grants and NIHR portfolio inclusion, to create a body of valuable research on this theme. In turn, this research will inform educational priorities for healthcare staff, to create the culture of communication and accessibility we aim for.

Who is involved?

Core research team: Emma Stapleton (ENT), Laura Turton (Audiology), Bhavisha Parmar (Academic Audiology), Sarah Hughes (Academic SALT), Zara Musker (STP student and patient advocate)

Collaborating institutions:





INTEGRATE HNSCCUP National Audit 2021

We are grateful for the ENT UK Foundation Research Grants Programme for supporting our National Audit of the management of head and neck squamous cell carcinoma of unknown primary (HNSCCUP). This multicentre trainee-led initiative collected data from over 1,000 patients from 56 UK centres, providing a unique opportunity to learn about management of this relatively uncommon presentation on a national scale. Preliminary findings were presented at the National Multidisciplinary Consensus Day in November 2021 and meaningfully influenced the clinical recommendations that resulted by showing the real world impacts of current practice and offering insight into how the patient pathway could be streamlined to improve patient care.

John Hardman

Research Fellow | The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust
Chair | INTEGRATE (The UK ENT Trainee Research Network)



Post-operative Tonsillectomy (POPT) Study Outline

The Post-Operative Tonsillectomy (POPT) study is a prospective cohort study which aims to assess post-operative bleeding, pain and return to school or work following tonsillectomy in children and adults. The study was created by members of the North West ENT trainee research network and has been delivered entirely by ENT trainees across the North of England. It was adopted onto the NIHR portfolio and has recruited over 250 patients at 12 hospital sites.

The study provides patients with diaries to complete for 3 weeks following their tonsillectomy. This will allow us to better understand the post-operative journey of children and adults undergoing a tonsillectomy. The ENT UK Foundation NIHR research grant has enabled the study group to purchase essential items required for patient recruitment. We aim to conclude recruitment in July 2022 and present / publish thereafter.

Elliot Heward & John Rocke
GMC CRN Research Network