THE SILENT EPIDEMIC

Improving Long-Term Care & Resident Well-Being Through Technology

CLAIRE E. WICKERSHAM[1], PHDC, MGS, MS & NATALIE V. SHELLITO[2], MA, MS

BACKGROUND

Hearing loss (HL) has become a largely untreated epidemic among older adults and its prevalence is expected to double over the next 25 years. According to national estimates, nearly 70 percent of older Americans have HL. Untreated HL contributes to adverse health outcomes and impairs people socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively, which can lead to costly care and diminished quality of life. HL is as a driving force behind social isolation and may lead to dementia, depression, disability and mortality. New and innovative technologies hold promise for improved practices and care delivery. Specifically, hearing assistive and social engagement technologies are becoming an increasingly popular method for addressing this problem.

OBJECTIVE

To assess the relationship between wireless assistive headphone and engagement technology and mood among residents with dementia living in memory care communities.

UMASS BOSTON

[1]Eversound; [2]Department of Gerontology, McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston;

Contact: claire@eversoundHQ.com

METHODS & SAMPLE

Dependent Variable: Resident mood

Independent Variables: Hearing assistive wireless headphone technology

Recruitment: 2 long-term memory care communities in MA

Sample: N=20

Data: Quantitative cross-sectional data was obtained to assess the relationship between the assistive hearing technology and resident mood. All data was entered and analyzed through SPSS.

Measures: Standardized self-reported measures of mood was recorded at baseline and post-intervention. To measure subjective well-being, participants rated current mood (i.e., “Which face shows how you feel right now”) on a 5-point likert scale. Participants used graphics of faces to rate mood (1=very sad; 2=somewhat sad; 3=neutral; 4=somewhat happy; 5=very happy) before and after using wireless hearing technology during activities including exercise, trivia, and music.

SMILEY FACE ASSESSMENT SCALE

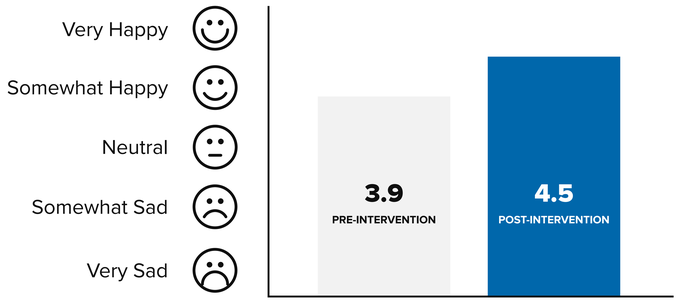


Figure 1. Pre and post-session means of mood assessments (Smiley-Face Assessment Scale).

RESULTS

- Mean mood prior to use of assistive hearing technology was 3.9, which increased to 4.5 following activity participation using the technology.
- A statistically significant improvement in mood was achieved from baseline to follow-up. Mean change in mood state was 0.6 on a scale of 1-5 ($p < 0.05$).
- 35% of participants experienced improved mood (7/20)
- Mood improved by nearly 20% on average

DISCUSSION

Preliminary findings suggest that wireless headphone technology enables senior living communities to enhance mood during group-based activities. Previous research has found that positive mood facilitates activity and engagement in long-term care and ultimately leads to better health outcomes. Future research is needed to expand on these findings.

