Disability Disparities through Health Equity

Presenters:

Diane Ducharme, The IMAGE Center

Carla Beyer-Smolin, Hearing Health Advocate

Inclusive Health

Inclusive health focuses on ensuring that everyone, regardless of their abilities, has access to necessary services, information, and tools.

Quick Stats on Vision Disabilities

- Approximately 8% of the US population, or nearly 20 million people, have visual impairments. (Georgetown University)

- Over 1 million are considered totally blind.

- This number will double by 2050, according to NIH.

Areas of Concern for People with Vision Disabilities

- Websites, Online forms and Telehealth Services

- Accessible Healthcare Facilities

- Technology

Websites, Online forms and Telehealth Services

- Under HHS rules websites, mobile apps and self-service devices such as kiosks must be accessible for the blind under reasonable accommodations. Two large lawsuits were on kiosks against Quest Diagnostics and LabCorp.

- Many websites and telehealth platforms offer voice interfaces and screen readers, but this does not mean they are accessible.

- These platforms should be tested for compliance.

- Highest standard of website compliance is Vispero

- Contact:
  Matt Ater, Vispero™ | Senior Vice President
  17757 US Highway 19 N, Suite 200, Clearwater, FL 33764
  703-944-7317
  mater@vispero.com
  www.vispero.com

- GBMC and Hopkins patient portals work well with screen readers.

Accessible Healthcare Facilities

- Visually impaired individuals may encounter physical barriers when visiting healthcare facilities.

- How to minimize barriers

- Braille signage, trained staff, and more inclusive environments.

- Tactile maps and audio assistance

- Don't ask who brought you or who is going to help you

- Be lenient on arriving late for an appointment because of transportation

Technology

Several mobile apps and devices are designed to assist with tasks like medication management, appointment tracking, and health monitoring.

- **Aira**: This app connects users to trained professionals who can assist with visual tasks in real-time. From reading labels to navigating public spaces, Aira offers valuable support for daily life.

- **Be My Eyes**: A global community of volunteers helps visually impaired individuals by providing assistance through live video calls. This app can help with reading documents, identifying objects, and navigation. Be My AI is the artificial intelligence component of Be My Eyes.

- **Seeing AI**: Developed by Microsoft, this app uses artificial intelligence to describe the world around the user, helping them identify text, objects, and even people.

Thank you!

For any questions please contact:
Diane Ducharme
The IMAGE Center
dducharme@imagemd.org
443-352-0716

Quick Stats on Hearing Loss

- More than 50 million Americans have some degree of hearing loss. That's about **1 in 7** people in the U.S. (NIDCD and U.S. Census)

- Hearing loss is the **3rd** most common chronic physical condition in the U.S., twice as prevalent as diabetes or cancer. (CDC)

- Hearing loss is associated with other common health issues such as diabetes and heart disease. (Healthy Hearing-HHF)

- Hearing loss is on the rise and is expected to affect 2.5 billion people worldwide by 2050. (WHO)

- 65.3% (21.5 million) of people 71 years or older have hearing loss in the U.S. (JAMA)

- 1 in 500 infants are born with or develop hearing loss in early childhood. (CDC)

- More than one in 10 (5.1 million) children and teens six to 19 years of age have some degree of hearing loss. (ASHA)

Source: Hearing Loss Association of America, www.hearingloss.org

Who has hearing loss in healthcare setting?

- Patient

- Caregiver

- Parent

- Family member

- Staff

- Nurse

- Doctor

Areas of Concern with Hearing Loss

- Focus must be on providing access in all situations where communication occurs.

- Establish good communication rules. Shouting and talking loud does not help understanding.

- Ask what is needed. Do not assume a sign language interpreter is the solution.

- Consider sign language and video relay interpreters, hearing assistive technologies and other modifications to help aid communication.

Communication Tips

When speaking to someone with a hearing loss:

- Get the listener's attention before speaking.

- Face the listener to facilitate speechreading.

- Avoid speaking from another room.

- Speak clearly at a moderate pace, without yelling.

- Don't chew or cover your mouth while talking.

- Repeat or rephrase as needed; be patient and respectful.

- Don't use dismissive comments, such as "never mind."

If you have hearing loss:

- Tell people you have hearing loss.

- Express your listening needs clearly.

- Find a quiet, well-lit spot for conversation.

- Listen actively and look for visual clues.

- Admit it if you miss something—ask questions and don't bluff.

- Use assistive listening devices or other technology.

- Plan ahead for difficult listening situations.

Source: Hearing Loss Association of America website, www.hearingloss.org)

Solutions and Resources on Communication Access

- Scheduling on phone: consider voice amplifier microphone headset
- Consider FDA approved masks with clear window to enable speechreading and facial cues. This not a replacement for captions and voice can still be difficult to hear
- Front desk/reception area: consider hearing counter loop
- Lab, Exam room, Hospital/Outpatient Surgery, Discharge: use communication tips, respect of hearing devices
- Telehealth: captioning access is highly important
- Use Communication Access Plan for Providers and Patients (HLAA, CMS)
- Pen and paper, whiteboard
- Tablets, smartphones, tablets with speech to text apps - Live Caption, Otter, Ava, Live Transcribe
- Use Video Relay Interpreting, Captioning Assisted Real-Time Captioning (CART)
- Hearing assistive devices, UbiDuo
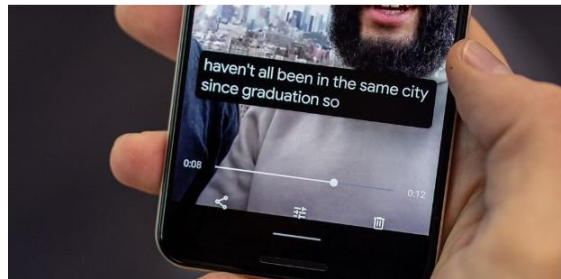
Safe N Clear   Live Caption   Hearing Counter Loop   UbiDuo

Resources for Communication Access in Healthcare

Guides

- **Communication Access in Healthcare**, HLAA

- **Communication Access**, ASHA

- **Auditory Sensory Disabilities Brochure** ,CMS

- **Visual Sensory Disabilities Brochure**, CMS

Products

- **MD-TAP AT Library**

- **Diglo Communications, Hear World, Hear More**

Videos

- **Effective Communication and Healthcare**, video from Northwest ADA Center

- **HLAA Virtual Meeting: National Hospital Safety Program** video

Articles

- **Communication Access in Healthcare articles**, HLAA

- **Hearing Loss in the Hospital is Hell,** Living with Hearing Loss Blog, Shari Eberts

- **Disparities impacting the deaf and hard of hearing: a narrative and approaches to closing health care gaps**, NIH

- **Disparities in vision health and eye care**, NIH

Thank you!

For any questions, please contact:

Diane Ducharme
The IMAGE Center
dducharme@imagemd.org
443-352-0716

Carla Beyer-Smolin
Hearing Health Advocate
cbsmolin@gmail.com