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Is it Hearing Loss or is it Dementia? How do you know?

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Is it Hearing Loss or is it Dementia? How Do You Know?

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Introduction

Adults over 65 years in US:
- 5.4 million have most common form of dementia – Alzheimer's
- one in three has a hearing loss

2050 projections worldwide:
- more than 13.8 million people are expected to be affected by dementia
- more than 1.2 billion people are expected to have a hearing loss

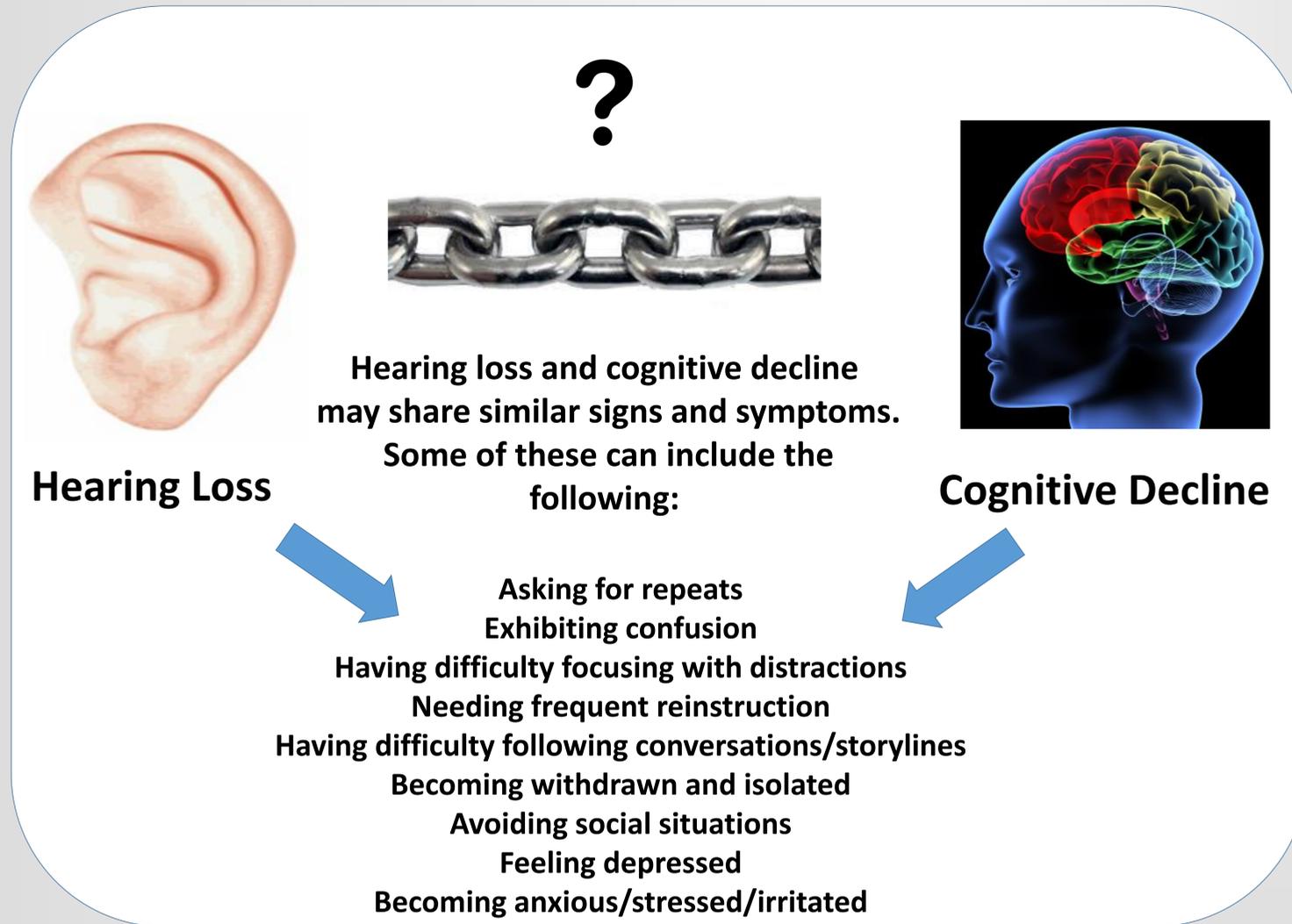There is a high comorbidity of hearing impairment and dementia

Hearing impairment is *associated* with increased risk of developing dementia; at this point no positive *causal* link has been established

Earing aids don't prevent, delay or slow cognitive decline, *but* they allow for cognitive- engaging

?

Hearing Loss

Cognitive Decline

Hearing loss and cognitive decline may share similar signs and symptoms. Some of these can include the following:

Asking for repeats
Exhibiting confusion
Having difficulty focusing with distractions
Needing frequent reinstruction
Having difficulty following conversations/storylines
Becoming withdrawn and isolated
Avoiding social situations
Feeling depressed
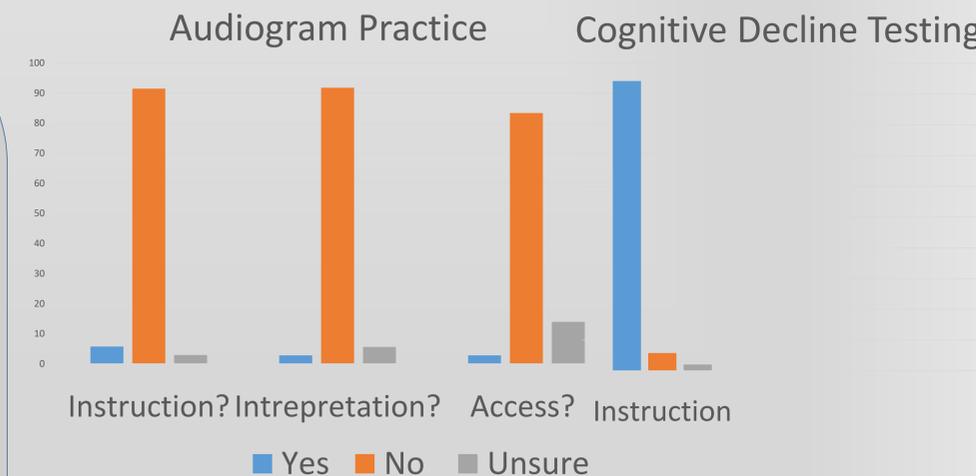Becoming anxious/stressed/irritated

Conclusions

The majority of respondents had the knowledge and tools to administer and interpret cognitive screening tests; however, the majority of respondents did not have the knowledge and tools to administer and interpret hearing screening tests. For interdisciplinary cooperation, pure-tone air-conduction audiometry might be considered for in-service or as part of the curriculum for Occupational Therapy.

Purpose & Methodology

Purpose: To determine if Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) in Montana have the knowledge and tools to differentiate between cognitive impairment and hearing loss.

Methodology: A survey was sent via email to OTs and COTAs in Montana. Qualtrics responses received were 36 (n = 36). A majority of respondents(53.6%) had been practicing over 20 years. Geriatrics was setting in which most worked, followed by rehabilitation, acute care, and orthopedics.

Findings

Almost all respondents stated that they had experienced concern about a patient's/client's cognitive functioning (100%) and hearing ability (88.89%). Concerns were resolved by reinstructing, reframing, explaining to a significant other, and directing to appropriate referrals. There were a variety of cognitive screening tests administered.

94.29% had received instruction for administering cognitive screening tests, 85.71% had access to cognitive screening testing tools, and 85.29% could interpret results from cognitive screening tests.

Inversely, regarding hearing screening testing, 91.43% had not received instruction for operating an audiometer, 83.33% did not have access to an audiometer, and 91.67% could not interpret an audiogram.

Audiogram Practice   Cognitive Decline Testing

Instruction? Intrepretation? Access? Instruction

■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

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