



# HEARING MATTERS AUSTRALIA

Support from real life experience

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## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

Hearing loss is not always evident in one-to-one settings, where the context is predetermined, and the topic of conversation is reasonably predictable. This means that many healthcare professionals do not always recognise the extent of communication difficulties being experienced by patients with hearing loss. The following suggestions may help:

- Display a **Hearing Help Available** sign at reception and make a note of a hearing loss on the patient's file as a reminder for each visit. HMA will supply signs free of charge, on request.
- Adopt optimal communication strategies in your clinic, when dealing with people with hearing loss, and know how to minimise communication problems as much as possible.
- Gain the attention of the person with hearing loss before calling them into surgery or speaking to them. Raising your voice may not overcome communication difficulties with people with hearing loss and may only result in a loss of privacy.
- Speak directly to your patient rather than any accompanying friends or family, in order to ensure your patients maintain their dignity, privacy and autonomy in your clinic.
- Face your patient at the same level when speaking – head down, writing, trying to do several jobs at the same time, looking in drawers, hands in front of mouth, glasses or pen in mouth, speaking from a distance or behind equipment (e.g. a radiographer saying “hold your breath” from behind a screen), surgical masks or even moustaches can cause extra problems for those who rely on lip reading.
- Patients may have difficulty hearing instructions as part of an examination or assessment, especially if they cannot see you or when they have turned their hearing aid off due to equipment interference. You will need to gain their attention to explain or demonstrate what is required.
- Face your patient when you provide the diagnosis and recommend treatment – write down key words to provide confirmation and clarity
- CONSIDER the purchase of a small **amplifier and lapel microphone** for your surgery and the reception desk - these inexpensive devices are readily available and can be used easily in any situation to amplify speech for those having difficulty hearing. Contact your local assistive listening device supplier for further information.

**Recommend patients in your clinic who are living with hearing loss to contact HMA. We offer support, advice, and a network of lived experience to ensure your patients living with hearing loss experience optimal communication, social and work lives.**

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Information sheets are shared by HMA as a service to members and those in the community who have an interest in hearing loss. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, however HMA accepts no responsibility for any adverse consequences arising from the contents of these sheets.

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