Baycrest Hard of Hearing Club: Audiologic Rehabilitation in a Social Context

Marilyn Reed
Professional Practice Leader for Audiology
Baycrest Geriatric Health Care System

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Outline

• Why it all started
• Designing AR program to meet client needs
• Use of ICF framework
• Program goals
• Program components
• Evaluation and outcomes
Referral of N.E. from Psychiatry

- 80 year old woman
- Severe to profound hearing loss
- Limited benefit from amplification
- Recently widowed
- Socially isolated
- Depressed
- Wanted to meet others with hearing loss in community
Assistive Technology (Techno-Granny)

- Hearing Aids
- FM System
- Blackberry
- VCO Phone
- Fax
- E-mail
- Strobe + amplified alarms
- Vibrating alarm
WHO ICF Framework (2001)

- Health Condition (Disorder or Disease)
  - Impairment
  - Activity Limitations
  - Participation Restrictions

- Contextual Factors
  - Environmental/Personal
ICF & Consequences for QoL

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Hard of Hearing Club Goals

Social Isolation
• Improve social interactions
• Participation in group activities
• Develop friendships, social network
• A sense of belonging to community

Loneliness/sadness/depression
• Increase confidence and self-esteem
• Improve mood
• Develop optimism
• (Re)acquire hope
Goals (cont’d)

Coping with ADLs
• Improve communication skills
• Self-efficacy; confidence in daily interactions; participation in health care
• Access to environment and alarms through use of AT

Independent living/safety
• Manage ADLs independently
• Enhance safety through use of technology & behavioural strategies
• Improve access for client, family & friends
• Know about and use available resources effectively to support independent living
Hard of Hearing Club: A R in a Social Context

- Addresses participation needs through enabling social interactions
- Provides partners for communication
- Accessible environment with supportive communication strategies
- Opportunity to practice strategies in meaningful context with realistic challenges
- Enables discussion of common problems and collaborative problem solving
- Provides opportunity for mutual support and empowerment
- Allows for inclusion of family & friends
Program components

- On-going (running 9 years)
- Regular weekly meetings allow friendships to be developed and sustained
- Limited group size (average = 12)
- Accessible environment: good acoustics, well-lit with natural light, seating in circle with light on facilitator
- Shared personal factors: age, hearing loss, culture, history
- Discussion of common concerns and solutions
- Communication ‘rules’ compiled by group members observed and enforced by facilitator
HOHC Rules for Communication:

• One speaker at a time!!
• No side conversations with your neighbour
• Ensure others can see your face for speech reading
• Keep your hands away from your mouth
• Speak slowly using ‘Clear Speech’
• Paraphrase when repeating
• Pay attention to the group, and the speaker; watch the speaker’s face.
• Be (politely) assertive about not hearing
• Raise your hand to let others know you can’t hear, or wish to speak
• Choose a seat that enables you to see and hear the group
Program components, cont’d

• Experiential learning: communication strategies practiced with facilitator and each other
• Facilitator with strong communication skills and technical knowledge
• Assertiveness training
• Self and group advocacy
• Educational component combined with informal social ‘tea time’
Evaluation – the challenge!

Outcomes:
• Longevity; running for 9 years
• Attendance consistently high
• Referrals based on successes
• Social activities outside the group
• Hearing Handicap Inventory for the Elderly (HHIE)
• Testimonials from members, families and psychiatry
• Qualitative evaluation with focus group
HHIE

2003

2009
Qualitative Analysis
Focus Group: Questions

- Why do you come here?
- What hearing related problems do you struggle with?
- Which of these things does the group help you with?
- Are there other things outside of here that the group has helped you with?
- What have you learned in the group that has been of value to you?
- Would you recommend this group to other people and why?
Outcomes – focus group

Reasons for attendance:

Key themes address isolation, confidence & coping with ADLs:

- Reason to go out; something to look forward to; highlight of the week
- Relationships; making friends; participation; closeness; warmth
- Feeling valued and included; respected
- Support; share problems with honesty, tolerance and understanding
- Enables communication; “only place I can hear and be heard”
- Educational; “learn something new every time”
- Enjoyment
- Group facilitator
Outcomes (cont’d)
How the group helps:

Key Themes:
• Share problems with others who understand
• Feel wanted, with friends, “at home”
• Provides communication strategies for social interactions
• Encourages assertiveness and gives tools for getting others to help
• Helps to manage ADLs
• Educates about and encourages use of AT
• Collective voice for advocacy
Psychiatry Outcomes re. HOH Club for NE, reported Oct. 2009

• “Huge impact” on depression and isolation
  - fulfills need to connect with others
  - provides regular social context, where comfortable and not stigmatized
  - rules and structure enable participation in communication
  - provides peer support
• Improved self esteem
• Enhanced self-efficacy
• Less reliant on family
• Reduced psychiatric service utilization
Family/caregiver outcomes

The Hard of Hearing Club has had a profound effect on my mother:
It gives her a social life with people who understand her own situation with lack of hearing
It addresses her loneliness by giving her a wider group of people that she can socialize with
It has given her a base from which to focus, share and learn about how hard it is to live life as a HOH person
It has given her a positive routine to look forward to - she knows on Tuesdays she has her club - a safe venue for exposing her disability while enjoying the company of others who can understand her feelings
She feels that you respect and understand this loss in socializing and enhance the lives of the club members by teaching how to live with it
So for me, there is absolutely no doubt that the HOH Club has helped my mother and continues to do so
In their own words…