A Community-based Hearing Intervention for Korean American Older Adults with Hearing Loss: A Pilot Study

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Hearing Loss in Ethnic Minority Older Adults

Background

• Hearing loss remains largely underdiagnosed and undertreated
  - Rates of hearing aid use: 10-18% in minority vs. 29-35% in White older adults

• Culturally tailored counseling and education program built on awareness of varying health beliefs and behaviors is essential
Hearing Loss in Korean American Older Adults

Background

• Older KAs predominantly monolingual first-generation immigrants

• Little is known about the hearing health care among older KAs
  – Rates of hearing aid use in Korea 8-11%
  – High costs and social stigma towards hearing aid use
  – Older KAs may face additional challenge from language barriers and navigation difficulties
Cultural Adaptation of Hearing Intervention

Background

• **Aim:**

To develop and test the feasibility of a culturally adapted hearing intervention to older KAs with hearing loss
Methods

• **Original intervention**: HEARS program developed for urban, low-income older adults
  – Hearing screening, aural rehabilitative strategies, immediate fitting of an assistive listening device
• **Cultural adaptation**: Barrera & Castro model
• **Study population**: KAs ≥ 60 years with hearing loss and their communication partners
• **Analyses**:
  – descriptive analyses from focus group data
  – Pre- and post- intervention changes in communication, social isolation, depression, quality of life, attitudes towards hearing loss and assistive device
1. Information Gathering

Cultural Adaptation Stages

- **Impact of Hearing Loss**
  
  "If you go to places like restaurants, many people talk at the same time. When many people talk, voices overlap. I can’t understand and that makes me not want to go to those places more and more." *Participant with HL 004*

- **Self-perception of hearing loss**
  
  "Just like other people mentioned, I can’t hear when the priest speaks. Other people hear, laugh, talk, and express, but I don’t because I can’t hear. … Honestly, I debated whether I should go to church or not." *Participant with HI 005*

- **Coping Strategies to Hearing loss**

- **Barriers to Hearing Care**
1. Information Gathering

Cultural Adaptation Stages

- Normal part of aging, personal shame, unrecognized disability

- “In fact, I tend not to talk about [hearing loss] because it is embarrassing that other people see or know about it. … Although I’ve had [hearing loss] for a while, I don’t say it. I hide it.” Participant with HI 004
1. Information Gathering

Cultural Adaptation Stages

- Impact of Hearing Loss
  - Price (healthcare services, hearing aids), language, perceptions about hearing aids, lack of knowledge in hearing care options

- Self-perception of hearing loss
  - “I saw a TV program [saying] that there is no solution for hearing loss. I was even more discouraged when I heard it but then life goes on… Really there is no other solution.”

- Coping Strategies to Hearing loss

- Barriers to Hearing Care
2. Preliminary Adaptation Design

Cultural Adaptation Stages

• Functional translation of intervention materials while preserving core elements of original interventions

• Culturally tailored interventions:
  – Bilingual and bicultural materials and staff
  – Involvement of family in intervention
  – Adjustment of materials to participant literacy level
  – Intervention in safe and familiar locations
  – Follow-up session in group setting
3. Preliminary Adaptation Tests

Cultural Adaptation Stages

- Practice delivering a preliminary version of adaptation
- Preliminary test with key community informants
4. Adaptation Refinement

Cultural Adaptation Stages

- Use feedback from the preliminary test to revise the intervention
5. Cultural Adaptation Trial

Cultural Adaptation Stages

• Conduct a pilot study of the intervention to older Korean Americans (n=15) and their communication partners (n=15)

• Determine whether the intervention has desired effects on engagement and health outcomes through focus group and semi-structured interviews
5. Cultural Adaptation Trial

Cultural Adaptation Stages

- How much did the program help you understand your hearing?
  - Not at all 0%
  - Some 20%
  - A great deal 80%
- How much did the program help you gain confidence in using the listening device?
  - Not at all 7%
  - Some 7%
  - A great deal 87%
- How much did the program help you have more conversations?
  - Not at all 0%
  - Some 27%
  - A great deal 73%

How many hours did you use the listening device?

- 4-8 hours 53%
- 1-4 hours 20%
- < 1 hour 0%
- ≥ 8 hours 27%
- Not at all 0%
Conclusion

- This study is the first to report a hearing healthcare model using a community outreach program in a population of Korean-American older adults.
- A community-based hearing health intervention can be an effective way to address poor access to and knowledge in hearing healthcare among minority older adults.
- The methods and results of this study may provide a basis of further investigation to fully understand hearing loss in other older, ethnic minority populations in the US.
Acknowledgement

- Frank Lin, MD PhD
- Carrie Nieman, MD MPH
- Sara Mamo, AuD, PhD
- Kyoo Shim, MPH
- Hae-Ra Han, PhD

- Additional presentations at the 6th CGHH Meeting
  - Evaluation of over-the-counter hearing devices by Dr. Mamo
  - HEARS: A Community-Delivered, Affordable, Accessible Hearing Care Intervention for Older Adults by Dr. Nieman