

Script – Broadcasting – The link between hearing loss and dementia

INTRO

Hearing loss can affect anyone. According to some studies, about 23% of Americans ages 12 and older experience hearing loss. While it can be mild or severe, hearing loss can also increase the odds of developing dementia later in life.

That's according to a [study](#) published in JAMA that focused on people ages 70 and older.

While the reasons aren't clearly understood, it's important to note that there is a causal effect between hearing loss and dementia, according to Christopher Workman, Au. D., an audiologist with OSF HealthCare.

VO

In the past 30 years Dr. Workman has seen several patients with cognitive issues including dementia, and that number is growing. Some of their symptoms are significant, which he says raises concerns about their cognitive capabilities.

He adds that one way to prevent feelings of loneliness, depression and to stay socially active is by wearing hearing aids.

(((SOT)))

Dr. Christopher Workman, audiologist, OSF HealthCare

"I've read a number of these studies over the past several years and there's some debate as to exactly what's happening or what's causing it," he says. "But I think that hearing aids can play a role in minimizing the potential for dementia occurring. Obviously, you could still have dementia without and have good hearing. You could also have dementia and have hearing aids early on and still have dementia. It's not a cure, but it can help minimize some of the factors that may lead to dementia." (:37)

TAG

The goal is to treat the patient's hearing loss as soon as possible before they experience any signs of dementia or cognitive decline. Many times, if an audiologist does suspect some cognitive decline, he or she will refer the patient back to their primary care provider for further evaluation.

Dr. Workman stresses that not everyone who experiences hearing loss is going to get dementia. But he encourages patients and family members to pay close attention to potential warning signs such as asking people to repeat themselves, accusing people of mumbling or turning up the volume on the TV, for example.