

Adult hearing care in Europe and the EU Project AHEAD III

F. Grandori

Institute of Biomedical Engineering – National Research Council, Milan, Italy

Activities of AHEAD were mainly focused on early treatment of hearing disability to significantly improve the quality of life and extend the functional status of adult population. Hearing disability is indeed one of the most common chronic health conditions in older adults, and have important implications for the quality of life. These concepts were used as starting points for the development of most of the activities of the AHEAD III project. Many Working Groups of AHEAD III were devoted to define and evaluate screening methods for adult hearing screening. Screening programs can be advocated if evidence is provided to support each of the three commonly accepted criteria: the burden of disability must be significant enough to justify a screening, effective intervention strategies must be available for the detected condition, and accurate, practical and convenient screening tests must exist. Available screening methods and their feasibility for adults have been extensively investigated in terms of identification of hearing disability, sensitivity, specificity, reliability, test duration, limitation of age range, requirements of functions and skills other than hearing (e.g., memory, cognition), reproducibility, needs for instruction and training for the subject to be tested, culture and language, acceptance of the test results by the subject (to increase the follow-up rate), and costs. The main result was that hearing disability can be identified by methods using speech stimuli in noise. Results of this analysis for a number of screening methods and techniques will be summarized and discussed during the presentation.

