

Abstract EFAS/DGA 2007

Ear Europe

Grote, J. J.

International Federation of Oto-Rhino-Laryngological Societies

In 1995 a WHO resolution (48.9) for the prevention of Hearing Loss was approved. The action was a combined effort of IFOS and ISA.

Since then no concerted action has been taken.

Hearing International takes care of Hearing Centers mainly in Asia, but the major problem of hearing loss needs action. IFOS started the worldwide action "Hearing for All". Hearing loss is the most occurring handicap in the world, 10% of the world population will be 12% in 2015. Prevention is urgent.

A strategy to combine all NGO's working in this field will take too much time and is difficult because of the nature of the handicap. Action is needed.

IFOS has developed the action plan with the RAND Corporation. Action will focus on awareness on all levels to start with International Organizations as WHO, World Bank, UNESCO and United Nations. Hearing loss is not included in their programs. The first result is a paragraph in the Global Vaccination program. We have to work to be included in the International Plan on Aging.

Awareness must be stimulated in the United Nations in connection with the millennium goal I "Fighting poverty" and millennium goal II "Primary education for children". If hearing loss is not mentioned, governments will not take action.

In the developing world the action will focus on vaccination and integration of primary ear care in primary health care. In the developed world the action will focus on noise protection (especially children and young adults are at risk) and tertiary prevention (rehabilitation with hearing aids). It is unacceptable that in the developed countries in general 1 in 3/5 elderly people who need a hearing aid, do not have one and are excluded of society.

Action for awareness is difficult because hearing impairment is not appealing as disability. We need more studies on the socio economic consequences of hearing loss in Europe. In the century of communication a normal hearing is the first prerequisite for socio economic development and for employment.

