

Development Of A Protocol And A Clinical Tool To Assess The Audiological Needs Of Individuals With Hearing Loss

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Objectives: To develop a protocol and a clinical tool to assess the audiological needs of individuals with hearing loss.

Background: Needs assessment is an important part of the audiological evaluation. However, what constitutes a comprehensive evaluation of needs remains unclear.

Methods: Based on the existing literature and on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF; 2001), an initial draft of a needs assessment protocol was developed. The document was submitted to a panel of 14 expert audiologists, including representatives from the University of Montreal School of Audiology, Quebec College of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, Quebec Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, Régie de l'assurance maladie du Québec, Ministry of Health and Social Services, and an association of persons with hearing loss. Once revised by the expert panel, the protocol was discussed (individual semi-structured interviews) with 14 audiologists who worked in public and private settings. The interviews served to explore the applicability of the needs assessment protocol in a clinical setting. Based on the results of the interviews, a final version of the protocol was devised. In addition, a clinical tool (a questionnaire based on the needs assessment protocol) was developed.

Results: The needs assessment protocol covers the following areas: 1- Audiological needs (activity limitations, participation restrictions, and environmental factors), 2- Living conditions (social networks and living environment), 3- Personal factors (motivation, dexterity, cognition, etc.), 4- Discussion with the client concerning the goals of the treatment program and the intervention strategies retained for each goal, and 5- Recommendations. The protocol and the clinical tool will be discussed in detail during the presentation.

Conclusions: A research project is currently underway to assess the psychometric properties of the clinical tool as well as to evaluate the applicability of the protocol in clinical settings.