

## **Let the hearing aid address the hearing loss, let the audiologist address the psychosocial impacts**

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### **Overview:**

Human beings are social creatures. Our connection to others enables us to survive and thrive. Yet, both ageing and hearing loss increase our vulnerability to social isolation and loneliness, highlighting the important role that audiologists can play in helping people overcome the psychosocial (combined social and emotional) impacts of hearing loss.

Our team has conducted research that identifies the clinical tools and approaches that assist older adults to socially (re)engage. We will first present the findings of our systematic review identifying the evidence-based clinical approaches used by the wider allied health community to promote social engagement for older adults. Delegates will discuss their potential use in the audiology setting.

We will then present the findings of our international study identifying the tools and approaches used specifically by audiologists to help older adults with hearing loss socially (re)engage. Ninety-three tools and approaches were identified across eight concepts: 1) Involving the family/significant others; 2) Client accountability; 3) Personalising the rehabilitation program; 4) Encouraging use of support and community groups; 5) Referral for specialist support; 6) Focusing on social engagement; 7) Emotional support; 8) Identifying the clients' goals. Fifty-two Australian adult hearing aid users were then recruited to rate each statement as to its *benefit* and *acceptability* in the audiology setting, allowing us to identify those individual approaches that were deemed most beneficial and acceptable by audiology clients.

Delegates will select three clinical approaches from those presented in the aforementioned studies, preferably three that were previously unfamiliar to them. Delegates will use role-play to develop their own skills and confidence with the use of these three approaches, expanding their audiology "toolbox". Delegates will then work in small groups to design personalised clinical protocols to help them implement one new approach in their workplace.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Upon completion of this session, the participant will be able to...

- Describe evidence-based clinical approaches to assist older adults socially (re)engage and participate fully in life
- Demonstrate competence in the use of clinical tools / approaches that facilitate social and psychosocial (re)engagement for adults with hearing loss
- Define how they will implement and begin to use one new tool / approach in their clinical practice