

# The Dental Professionals' hearing loss and its silent role in affecting our careers and systemic health

SADJ October 2023, Vol. 78 No.9 p430

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## Introduction

In the bustling world of healthcare, dentistry often takes a backseat when it comes to discussions about occupational hazards. While the risks of musculoskeletal problems, exposure to infectious diseases, and stress are frequently acknowledged, there is a silent threat that looms over dental professionals - noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL). This article aims to shed light on the often-overlooked issue of hearing loss in the dental profession, emphasizing its profound impact on both careers and systemic health. Additionally, we will explore preventative measures to mitigate this burgeoning concern.

## The Decibel Dilemma

Dental practitioners are exposed to a relentless barrage of noises that are integral to their daily routines. High-speed drills, ultrasonic scalers, suction devices, and even conversations with patients can generate noise levels exceeding 85 decibels, well above the recommended safe limit of 70 decibels set by the World Health Organization (WHO). Over time, this prolonged exposure takes a toll on the delicate structures of the inner ear.

## The Consequences

The consequences of NIHL extend far beyond impaired hearing. Hearing loss among dental professionals can lead to communication breakdowns with patients, negatively affecting patient care and satisfaction. Furthermore, impaired hearing can hinder effective communication among the dental team, risking the safety and quality of procedures. The personal toll is also significant, as hearing loss can lead to social isolation, depression, and reduced quality of life.

## Silent Systemic Health Implications

Beyond the immediate impact on hearing, NIHL has been linked to systemic health issues. Studies have shown that chronic exposure to high noise levels can trigger stress responses, leading to increased blood pressure and an elevated risk of cardiovascular diseases. Moreover, the constant strain on the auditory system can result in fatigue and cognitive impairment, affecting the overall well-being and performance of dental professionals.

## Preventive Measures

Awareness is the first step towards mitigating the risks of NIHL in the dental profession. Dental schools and institutions should incorporate noise exposure education into their curricula, emphasizing the importance of protective measures such as earmuffs and earplugs. Dental practices must also invest in quieter equipment and create noise-controlled environments.

Regular hearing screenings should become a routine part of dental professionals' healthcare, enabling early detection and intervention. Additionally, frequent breaks during the workday and the implementation of quieter dental instruments can significantly reduce noise exposure.

## Conclusion

The true dental pandemic is the silent epidemic of hearing loss, affecting the careers and systemic health of dental professionals. It is high time that we recognize the risks and take proactive steps to address this issue. Through education, awareness, and preventive measures, we can ensure that the dental community thrives without sacrificing their auditory health. As guardians of oral health, let us not forget the importance of preserving our own ability to hear, communicate, and lead fulfilling lives while delivering exceptional care to our patients.

