EDITORIAL

Make Quality Hearing Health Information Available to All

By Thais C. Morata, PhD, and Shelly Chadha, PhD

Over six percent of the world’s population has disabling hearing loss. Across the globe, it can take years for those with hearing problems to seek care. Even when care is sought, the prescribed interventions are not often adopted. This issue has motivated the World Health Organization to coordinate World Hearing Day (WHD), an annual event that aims "to raise awareness on how to prevent deafness and hearing loss and promote ear and hearing care across the world." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention argues that "plain language makes it easier for everyone to understand and use health information," emphasizing its commitment to making high-quality information freely accessible to the public. As health articles on Wikipedia are collectively read more than 150 million times per month, one approach the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health is taking to communicate research findings involves improving health content on Wikipedia. That includes the adoption by university programs of the WikiEducation Foundation platform to train students in Wikipedia editing. Through this mechanism, students contribute evidence-based content to Wikipedia as a class assignment.

This year, NIOSH proposed and developed the online event Wiki4WorldHearingDay2019 to facilitate the improvement of Wikipedia content related to hearing, hearing health services, hearing testing, and preventive and rehabilitative interventions. The platform provided guidance and allowed anyone with access to a computer and the internet to participate. Several institutions joined by either promoting the event or contributing content to Wikipedia, including the National Center for Environmental Health, the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, the Hearing Center of Excellence, the French National Research and Safety Institute for the Prevention of Occupational Accidents, the International Society for Audiology, the Acoustical Society of America, the American Academy of Audiology, and Hear in Cincinnati. Participants from Cochrane, Cochrane Ear, Nose and Throat, and university programs in the United States worked together to contribute to the event's success.

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