

Communicating with Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients in hospital and healthcare settings.

Communicating in a health setting, especially in a busy clinic or ward situation, can be difficult at the best of times. The recent Covid 19 pandemic and the necessity for many healthcare staff to wear face masks has made communication even more difficult, especially for patients who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The majority of patients hospitalised due to Covid 19 are elderly and a high proportion of older people have some level of hearing loss.

Face masks have been shown to reduce speech clarity¹ and combined with the loss of lipreading and visual cues they can make communication between healthcare staff and patients extremely difficult.

We also know that good communication between health professionals and patients is critical for high quality and safe healthcare – so what can healthcare staff do to address this?

Chime recommends the following tips for healthcare professionals to help ensure good communication when caring for patients who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. These tips may also be helpful when used in other settings.

1. Goldin, A. et al. How Do Medical Masks Degrade Speech Recognition? Hearing Review 2020.



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Tips for communicating with patients:

- Face the patient and get their attention before speaking.
 - Speak slowly and clearly.
- Ask the patient how they prefer to communicate – written communication may be an option, or a sign language interpreter may be required.
 - Reduce background noise where possible.
 - Make sure hearing aid users have their aids in.
 - Consider using a listening device when a patient is struggling to hear.
- Repeat and rephrase information when not understood.
 - Take turns and check the patient's understanding.
 - Do not shout or exaggerate your words.
 - Do not speak to the patient while moving.



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