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Mental Fatigue in Patients with Hearing Loss and/or Tinnitus Undergoing Audiological Rehabilitation – A Pilot Study

Abstract: Mental fatigue or fatigue is a complex, subjective phenomenon often described as “an early exhaustion after physical or mental activity” related to e.g. loss of energy, sleep deprivation and fatigability. Mental fatigue is common after chronic health conditions, such as brain injury and neurological diseases. Hearing loss and tinnitus are two conditions affecting physical functioning, vitality and mental health, which may lead to mental fatigue. In the present study we identified and determined the degree of fatigue in patients with hearing loss and/or tinnitus undergoing advanced audiological rehabilitation at our department. Data on 76 consecutive patients were examined by the self-reported Mental Fatigue Scale (MFS) and analysed. The patients were subjected to hearing tests and Tinnitus Handicap Inventory (THI). The age-range of the study population were 38-65 years and most had normal hearing (37%) or mild-to-moderate hearing loss (46%). 17% had severe-to-profound hearing loss. A total of 56.5% had tinnitus, of which 39.5% scored £57 on the THI. 67% of the participants had severe MSF scores £20.5. Most of the patients with a THI score £57 belonged to that group. It appears that severe mental fatigue is more common in patients with severe tinnitus than sole hearing loss.

Biography: Sten Hellström (SH) is a senior professor in Otorhinolaryngology (ORL) at Karolinska Institutet (KI). Before retirement he was senior consultant and chief of the Dept of Audiology and Neurotology at Karolinska Univ Hospital. SH started his career at Umeå University the most Northern university of Sweden. Here he was the professor of ORL and CMO of the hospital during several years before moving to Stockholm. He was chairman of Acta Oto-Laryngologica Foundation during 20 years. At KI he is general secretary for Center for Hearing and Communication Research and was one of the initiators of Scientific Center for Advanced Pediatric Audiology. His research has mainly focused on middle ear but more recently on inner ear and hearing rehabilitation. He is an world expert in the field of otitis media and has published more than 300 papers. He has a broad network of international scientists.