Abstract:

To screen hearing and evaluate outcomes in community-dwelling older adults. Three thousand and twenty-five adults responded to an invitation to be screened by questionnaire, otoscopy, and pure-tone audiometry. Pure-tone average (PTA)>35 dB HL in the worse ear, unilateral hearing loss, or otoscopic findings were the criteria for referral for services. A questionnaire related to compliance with referral recommendations was completed by telephone interview for 160 randomly selected participants after 1-2 years from referral. The referral rate for audiologic/hearing aid evaluation was 46%, and referral for cerumen removal/medical evaluation was 17%. Of the people referred for audiologic/hearing aid evaluation, 18% tried a hearing aid; 2 years later, 11% were using a hearing aid. Screening recommendations affected participants’ decision to seek help. Study participants stated that the screening was helpful, it should be offered to everybody, and they would participate in future screenings. Although adult hearing screening offered timely identification of hearing loss for adults seeking help, follow-up with hearing aid treatment was low.