

# Hearing Health Matters!



Ontario Association of Professional Audiology Clinics

Your Hearing Deserves An Audiologist

## What You should know about Hearing Loss and Falls

Physicians routinely ask their older patients about well-known contributors (vision, dizziness) to falls. Perhaps not well known is that untreated hearing loss may increase the risks for falls.

One study showed "people with a 25-decibel hearing loss, classified as mild, were nearly three times more likely to have a history of falling. Every additional 10-decibels of hearing loss increased the chances of falling by 1.4 fold."<sup>1</sup> Researchers, Frank Lin, M.D. and Luigi Ferrucci, M.D., suggested:

- People with hearing loss may not be fully aware of their overall environment increasing the risk to tripping and falling
- Cochlear disorders may include vestibular dysfunction, leading to poor balance
- Cognitive overload may hinder balance

*"Gait and balance are things most people take for granted, but they are actually very cognitively demanding," Lin says. "If hearing loss imposes a cognitive load, there may be fewer cognitive resources to help with maintaining balance and gait."*<sup>2</sup>

## Are hearing aids the answer?

When looking at the effect of hearing aids on postural stability, one study showed that it became more difficult (as tasks became more complex) to maintain balance with hearing aids off compared to when hearing aids were on.

According to Timothy Hullar, M.D., "the results were conclusive. The hearing aids made a definitive difference in balance: With hearing aids on, they were able to maintain balance for twice as long as when their hearing aids were off."<sup>3</sup>

**These studies show "... just how important it is for physicians to share information about increasing the risks of falls with untreated hearing loss. Patients need encouragement to see an Audiologist."**



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(<http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/profiles/results/directory/profile/8389751/frank-lin>)

Frank Robert Lin, MD, PhD



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(<https://www.ohsu.edu/xd/health/services/providers/index.cfm?personID=3038>)

Timothy E. Hullar, MD

## References

1. [http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/media/releases/hearing\\_loss\\_linked\\_to\\_three\\_fold\\_risk\\_of\\_falling](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/news/media/releases/hearing_loss_linked_to_three_fold_risk_of_falling) (Published in the Archives of Internal Medicine)
2. <http://www.healthyhearing.com/report/52548-New-research-links-hearing-loss-to-an-increased-risk-of-falls> (Published in The Laryngoscope)
3. Ibid
4. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention. Home and Recreational Safety. Falls Among Older Adults: An Overview. 2013 (<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/falls/adultfalls.html>)

**With so many places to refer your patients, it becomes difficult to choose what is best for your patient.**

**"As independent practices, we are not limited. When your patient has a permanent and irreversible hearing loss, we can prescribe from 10 different hearing aid manufacturers."**

## Greater emphasis is being placed on hearing health



**"One out of three adults (age 65 and older) fall each year and falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries."<sup>4</sup> Evidence-based: Untreated hearing loss is linked to an increased risk of falling.**

**The Ontario Association of Professional Audiology Clinics (OAPAC)** represents independent audiology practices in Ontario.

## Like Physicians, Audiologists of OAPAC

- ✓ Own and manage their practice
- ✓ No quotas, no franchises, no conflict of interest
- ✓ Assess and make appropriate recommendations
- ✓ Share the licensed Act to prescribe hearing aids
- ✓ Offer full scope of practice to all ages
- ✓ Are regulated...No misleading advertising, no testimonials

**To find an OAPAC Clinic near you, call  
1-844-41-2-HEAR (4327)**



Audiologists spend 7 to 9 years in University. The minimum requirement to practice in Ontario is a Masters Degree in Audiology or equivalent.

**Sudden hearing loss? Call us immediately!**

**1-844-41-2-HEAR (4327)**

**[www.oapac.ca](http://www.oapac.ca)**