

Dementia creates listening issues in quiet, noisy environments

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Listening to the spoken word in noisy environments is challenging for everyone. Acoustic studies show people with mild dementia struggle to understand speech in both noisy and quiet environments, highlighting the

need for everyone to communicate clearly.

During the 181st Meeting of the Acoustical Society of America, which will be held Nov. 29-Dec. 3, Kate McClannahan, from Washington University School of Medicine, will discuss how background noise impacts spoken word recognition in people with [mild dementia](#). The talk, "The effect of mild dementia on [speech perception](#) in quiet and noise," will take place Wednesday, Dec. 1, at the Hyatt Regency Seattle.

Difficulty in understanding [speech](#), especially in background noise, is a common concern for older adults. Using a word identification task in quiet and noisy conditions, researchers examined the impact of mild dementia on speech perception. They tested individuals with and without mild dementia.

The scientists found word identification scores of those without dementia were significantly better in all conditions, meaning people with mild dementia symptoms recalled fewer words in both quiet and noisy situations.

In the quiet condition, the group with mild dementia missed around 20% of the words, while the control group missed approximately 5%. The findings indicate individuals with mild dementia struggle with understanding speech, even without background noise.

"What is important to take away from this study is that people who are experiencing mild [dementia](#) symptoms may have difficulty understanding speech in both quiet and acoustically challenging situations," said McClannahan. "Therefore, when conversing with someone who may be experiencing cognitive difficulties, considerations such as speaking more clearly and slowly, reducing [background noise](#) and distractions, making sure the listener can see the speaker's face, and providing ample contextual information, may help to improve the

listener's speech understanding."

McClannahan said taking these measures will aid effective communication for all listeners.

"If you or a loved one notice difficulty with your communication, seeking the advice and care of an audiologist is a great place to start!"

More information: acousticalsociety.org/asa-meetings/

Provided by Acoustical Society of America

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