Identify the Signs of Hearing Loss in Children and Adults During Better Hearing and Speech Month

36 Million American Adults Report Hearing Problems; 1 in 5 Teenagers Now Suffer From Hearing Loss

Staten Island, NY May 1, 2014—With hearing loss affecting 36 million American adults and spiking in younger populations in recent years, May’s Better Hearing and Speech Month is the ideal time for parents, spouses, and the general public to learn how to recognize the early signs of hearing problems. Staten Island based audiologists Dr. Shapiro and Dr. Fulman are encouraging people to educate themselves about the signs and available treatment options through the Identify the Signs campaign, a national effort of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The campaign is designed to combat an overall lack of awareness about hearing as well as speech/language disorders—a major barrier to treatment.

Hearing loss is a significant and growing public health issue—for people of all ages. Though 36 million adults suffer, only 1 out of 5 people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one. Approximately 15% (26 million) Americans between the ages of 20 and 69 have high frequency hearing loss due to exposure to loud sounds or noise at work or in leisure activities. One in 5 kids ages 12–19 is suffering from hearing loss, an increase of 31% since the late 1980s/early 1990s. This is a trend that coincides with skyrocketing use of personal audio technology.

Hearing loss can be present at birth or acquired. Although newborn hearing screening is widespread in the United States, hearing issues may develop after children leave the hospital. They also may result from ear infections, other illnesses such as chicken pox or influenza, head injury, or noise exposure. Therefore, parents should be attuned to the early signs of hearing loss even if their child passes a newborn hearing screening in the hospital.

“As an ASHA member and certified audiologist, I see patients every day who are benefitting enormously from treatment. Unfortunately, a large majority of them have needlessly suffered by waiting far too long to seek help—which is why the Identify the Signs campaign is so important,” said Dr. Fulman, Audiology Island “As May is Better Hearing and Speech Month, I suggest all people familiarize themselves with these signs at IdentifytheSigns.org and seek a hearing assessment
from an audiologist if they have a question about their hearing or a loved one’s hearing. Treatment is often easier and more effective than people think”, encourages Dr. Shapiro.

Left untreated, hearing loss in children can have a negative impact on their speech and language development, communication, and learning. This can impact social success, academic development, and future vocational choices. In adults, untreated hearing loss is tied to social isolation, depression, early exit from the workforce, and an overall reduced quality of life. New research also has found a strong link between degree of hearing loss and risk of developing dementia.

In children, parents should watch for the following signs of hearing loss:

- Lack of attention to sounds
- Failure to follow simple directions
- Failure to respond when his/her name is called
- Delays in speech and language development
- Pulling or scratching at his/her ears
- Difficulty achieving academically, especially in reading and math
- Social isolation and feeling unhappy in school
- Persistent ear discomfort after exposure to loud noise (regular and constant listening to electronics at high volumes)

In adults, signs of hearing loss include:

- Inattentiveness
- Buzzing or ringing in the ears
- Failure to respond to spoken words
- Muffled hearing
- Constant frustration hearing speech and other sounds
- Avoiding conversation
- Social isolation
- Depression

For more signs, treatment information, and other resources, visit www.audiologyisland.com. To schedule a hearing assessment with Audiology Island, contact 718-980-0188.