

Spotlight Feature on Tinnitus: Tinnitus Awareness Week 6-12 February 2012

SHROPSHIRE AUDIOLOGY SERVICES: TINNITUS SERVICE

Tinnitus (or the perception of sound) either in one or both ears may be reported as the primary complaint but more often, it is presented as a secondary or less important problem. It's true that often tinnitus is mild (around 10% of the population experience tinnitus) and it can be associated with wax, age related hearing loss or noise induced hearing loss, but it *can* also be a symptom of one or more underlying pathologies which need medical attention. Whether the cause of the tinnitus, **the distress and psychological effect on patients should not be underestimated.**

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| <p>Referring to ENT and Audiology</p> <p>Referrals can be made to ENT who will initially screen all Tinnitus patients and if appropriate refer to Audiology Services. All referrals received through ENT are seen within the 18 week pathway.</p> | <p>Audiology expertise</p> <p>The Audiologists providing the Tinnitus Service have specialised in this area. There are 7 clinicians who have been educated to either Masters level or have attended the European Tinnitus course or Hearing Therapy training.</p> |
| <p>Diagnostics & Assessment for Tinnitus and Hyperacusis</p> <p>Audiometry and Tympanometry Detailed history taking Loudness Discomfort Levels where required Tinnitus Handicap Inventory Full Hearing assessment as required</p> | <p>Accessible/Local Provision</p> <p>Tinnitus clinics are provided in the following locations: Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Princess Royal Hospital Telford, Oswestry, Craven Arms, Bridgnorth and Market Drayton clinics For Hearing Aids fittings, there are also 17 local community venues around the county.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Therapeutic Intervention</p> <p>The aim of the Tinnitus clinics within Audiology is to provide patients with :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge and Understanding – all patients are advised on the neurophysiological model of tinnitus. Each patient will receive individual counselling and advice, and a Personal Management Plan is agreed with each patient - Tools - to help manage the tinnitus to live well with it. Tinnitus Therapy helps to teach patients skills such as relaxation - to reduce the emotional reaction they have to the Tinnitus, and how to use sound enrichment effectively. Advice is also given on equipment such as sound balls, under pillow speakers to help at nighttime - Hearing Aids/ White Noise generators – where appropriate hearing aids are fitted as reduced hearing can cause increased central auditory gain. This can allow the Tinnitus to emerge or worsen. Where appropriate white noise generators are fitted. - Peer Support – Shropshire Audiology also provides a tinnitus relaxation course at Telford and Shrewsbury hospitals. Here patients are able to meet others with similar experiences and learn relaxation techniques. The aim is to provide a Tinnitus Support Group in the near future. | |

A Guide for GPs from the British Tinnitus Association

The British Tinnitus Association are trying to raise awareness in Primary Care following a number of reports and research to prove that “there is considerable scope for the greater involvement of primary care in the management of patients with tinnitus” (Good Practice Guide, department of Health 2009) In a recent document entitled “Pushing the Boundaries:

Evidence to support the development and implementation of good practice in Audiology”, baseline information from surveys and focus groups illustrated that patients often received limited advice on management of tinnitus in primary care.

Advising a patient that there is little or nothing that can be done about tinnitus and that they have to learn to live with it is both untrue and potentially very distressing to the patient.

What GPs can do:

1. Reassure the patient that help is available from ENT and Shropshire Audiology Services. www.sath.nhs.uk ENT and Audiology sections
2. Remain positive and encourage the patient to read helpful literature from the British Tinnitus Association. www.tinnitus.org.uk
3. Reassure the patient that often tinnitus will lessen in time and that there are ways to live well with tinnitus – Audiology can help patients to effectively manage it.
4. Advise patients that while they are waiting for their ENT / Audiology appointment they should avoid silence and try using “sound enrichment” – useful sources of sound to reduce the starkness of tinnitus includes quiet, uneventful music, a fan or water feature.
5. It has been very helpful for sleep and anxiety problems for patients to also get support and advice from the Primary Care Counsellors. We work closely with Psychological Services.

2010 Shropshire Audiology Tinnitus Survey Results

From the recent audit the department carried out on our tinnitus service, patients were asked if they wanted to add any additional comments to the service:

These included –

“I found the tinnitus counselling extremely useful and reassuring. My counsellor was excellent.”

“The counselling given has helped me a lot in understanding the causes and how to cope with tinnitus. So, thank you for the support given, it was gratefully received.”

2010 Master in Rehabilitation Dissertation results “Perceptions of the NHS Tinnitus Service to its users” by John Beharrell

The study showed that participants looked at information from the internet with reservation and scepticism. The participants found that the tinnitus service helped, the information given by the service was seen as being trusted because it was from a tinnitus specialist, and they felt the service gave them the support they needed.

“When I was referred to the clinic, eventually, that’s when my approach to it [the tinnitus] and my understanding of it became improved and I got proper information.”

“...she [the Hearing Therapist] was very, very supportive”

“I felt that there was someone there to lean on.”

What the participants wanted was for the GPs to have a better knowledge of tinnitus, a good understand of what help was available and reassurance regarding the tinnitus.

Training and Development in Tinnitus

The Shropshire Audiology Tinnitus Clinicians provide training to ENT colleagues on Tinnitus provision and we have attended some GP training days. We have a Tinnitus Clinical Interest Group within the service to discuss new technologies, treatment pathways and service improvements.

Form more information please contact

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