

Supplemental Material S2. Themes and subthemes identified in relation to the role of audiology clinic staff in detecting psychological concerns in adults with hearing loss.

Theme	Subthemes (number of meaning units within subtheme)	Description of subtheme	Meaning Unit
Awareness	General awareness of poor mental health (5)	It is important for audiology clinic staff to be aware of mental health issues that their client's may face, and how this awareness can be increased.	<p>Work is needed to understand how audiology clinic staff can be made more aware of mental health, and what to do about mental health.</p> <p>It is important for audiologists to be aware of their client's mental health. Creating awareness of mental health issues that client's may face is important for audiology clinic staff.</p> <p>The feeling of increased prevalence of emotional clients calling the clinic could be due to an increased awareness of mental health issues from clinic admin staff.</p> <p>People may need help identifying that someone else is suffering from a mental health problem</p>
Awareness	Awareness of the link between hearing loss and poor mental health (8)	Some clients and other health professionals involved in their care may not have a good understanding of the link between hearing loss and mental health. Audiologists can be the ones to increase this awareness. Audiologists can use the link between hearing loss and mental health to start a conversation with their clients about mental health.	<p>Some people do not know that mental health can be related to hearing loss. People who know about mental health problems may not know that this can be related to hearing loss.</p> <p>It is hard for clients to find information that links mental health and hearing loss.</p> <p>Clients may not express mental health concerns to audiologists because they do not know the link between mental health and hearing</p>

Audiologists can provide information to clients about the link between hearing loss and mental health in order to start a conversation about mental health

Audiology clinics could put up posters relating to mental health around the clinic to trigger the idea that it is appropriate mental health to be talked about in an audiology setting.

Mental health practitioners may not investigate whether hearing is the cause of mental health problems.

Clients might not realise that mental health problems are being caused or exacerbated by hearing loss

Symptom Identification	Conversations with the client about mental health (16)	Audiologists can find out about their client's mental health by having a conversation with them. A client's response to talking about mental health can vary (i.e. due to age, whether or not they feel it relates to their audiological appointment, whether the conversation is with their regular audiologist, how the question is phrased etc.). Some clients may not directly acknowledge mental health concerns to the audiologist.
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	Client's will not directly tell the audiologist that they are depressed and instead use alternative words to describe their symptoms of depression Many implant clients are open to talking about mental health issues with audiologists as they are already being asked about their mental health as part of the appointment process. Some clients may only feel comfortable talking to their regular audiologist about mental health concerns The audiologist may be the first person that has flagged or spoken about mental health issues with the client. Audiologists can build a better picture of a client's functioning using a combination of their clinical perspective, and the client's report of their own experience Some clients do not want to tell audiologists about their mental health issues. Older adult clients are not as open to talking about mental health as younger adults.
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Older adult clients may feel confronted if asked to speak about their mental health with audiology staff
 Clients may try and normalise behaviours that suggest a mental health concern
 Audiologists can highlight concerns to clients regarding their mental health. It is easy for audiologists to have a conversation with a client if they raise an obvious mental health symptom.
 Clients may feel more willing to discuss mental health concerns with audiologists if they see it mentioned around the clinic.
 Some audiology clinics do not directly ask the client if they have mental health issues.
 Asking about mental health at every appointment is common practice in other areas of health (e.g. pregnancy checks) and so this should also be common practice in an audiology clinic setting.
 The way that a mental health question is phrased to a client is important for them to answer honestly.
 The way that a mental health question is phrased to a client is important for them to not be offended.

Symptom Identification	Significant others help identify and report poor mental health (4)	Significant others are involved in the detection of psychological concerns.	<p>Audiologists can talk to a client's family about what their concerns and feelings are regarding how the client is going. Significant others may point out mental health concerns to an audiologist during an appointment. Audiologists will only find out that their client is depressed if somebody other than the client tells them Significant others (i.e., friends and family) help identify mental health concerns</p>
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Symptom Identification	Audiology staff observe the signs and symptoms of poor mental health (20)	Audiology clinic staff observe signs and symptoms of poor mental health. When clients who show strong emotions to clinic staff this often indicates an underlying psychosocial issue (which the client may or may not be aware of themselves). Clinic administration staff may observe signs that are not brought into the room with the audiologist.
		<p>Audiologists will have to infer (i.e. from the client showing mental health signs) that the client is suffering from mental health problems as the client will not directly state this.</p> <p>Audiologists may already know some of the mental health signs to look for with their clients.</p> <p>A client's behaviours may not look abnormal to an audiologist when seen at a static point in time, or when compared to better/worse functioning clients. Clients with hearing loss may show a range of emotions to clinic admin staff that may indicate underlying mental health concerns (i.e., angry, sad, despondent, etc.)</p> <p>Clients becoming irrationally upset could be a symptom of a more pressing mental health issue.</p> <p>Clinic admin staff who know specific clients well can notice when the client is acting differently (i.e., showing mental health signs)</p> <p>Clinic admin staff might see mental health signs/behaviours that are not brought into the room with the audiologist</p> <p>Clinic admin staff could look into a client's irrational emotional responses to see if there is something else going on for them.</p> <p>Clinic admin staff regularly speak with clients who express strong emotions towards them (i.e., angry, sad, etc.)</p> <p>Audiologists help detect mental health symptoms</p> <p>Audiometrists help detect mental health symptoms</p> <p>Audiology clinic staff think that detecting a client's mental health issues is important.</p> <p>Detecting mental health issues is important because audiology clinic staff deal with mental health concerns increasingly frequently.</p> <p>Clients may be aware of their own mental health symptoms</p> <p>Clients may not recognise/identify that they are suffering with mental health problems</p>

Clients may need help identifying that they need help for mental health problems
 Tinnitus triaging is good at identifying social withdrawal
 Tinnitus triaging does not identify mental health concerns associated with other aspects of hearing
 Clients are not aware of their own loneliness
 Clinic admin staff are dealing with emotional clients with increasing severity of symptoms, and with increasing frequency.

Symptom Identification	Using the client case history to detect poor mental health (14)	Case histories are useful for identifying "red flags" for poor mental health which audiologists then need to follow up. Case histories may be a less direct method for asking about poor mental health which might help clients feel more comfortable endorsing certain items.
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Audiologists can use a client's case history to gather information relevant to mental health
 Audiologists are better able to use case histories to identify potential mental health concerns than audiometrists
 Case histories do not give audiologists all of the information they need to know about a client's mental health
 From a case history form, knowing the individual symptoms of mental health problems that a client is experiencing is more informative to audiologists than knowing that they consider themselves to have a mental health condition.
 Audiologists could use case notes questions (particularly endorsed "red flag" questions) as a trigger for a bigger conversation about mental health
 Audiologists can further explore symptoms from case histories with clients that could be ear or mental health related.
 Some clients would be happy to tick boxes related to mental health questions.
 Some audiology clinics do ask clients directly about mental health issues as part of standard questionnaires
 Clients are more likely to endorse individual symptoms of mental health concerns on case history forms, than endorse a tick box for the mental health condition itself (i.e. depression)
 Clinic training should include putting more information into client's case notes.

Audiometrists need more training in evaluating case history forms for mental health "red flags."

Audiologists should collect additional information beyond that of a case history about a client's mental health

Audiologists should look for "red flags" on case history forms in regards to symptoms that may or may not be related to mental health.

Audiologists could use case history forms that list mental health symptoms for clients to tick, rather than asking the person directly.

Symptom Identification	Using screening tools to detect poor mental health (27)	Mental health screening tools can be used by audiologists to detect poor mental health. Audiologists need to consider when, how and which clients they want to administer screening tools to as they might not be appropriate for all clients. Audiology clinic staff require training to administer, score and communicate findings to the client.
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It is appropriate for audiologists to use mental health screening tools as part of their scope of practice.

Audiologists may screen clients informally (i.e. observation of client) during an appointment, without the use of formal mental health screening tools.

Mental health screening tools can highlight red flags to the audiologist before seeing the client.

Mental health screening tools used by audiologists are a good idea for vestibular and tinnitus clients.

Mental health screening tools need to be administered at the "right time" and with the "right client" by audiologists.

It is not appropriate for audiologists to provide mental health screening tools to clients before they have attend an appointment.

Audiologists could give mental health screening tools to clients before their appointment (e.g., similar to a privacy form).

Mental health screening tools can be subtly brought into an audiology session once the client has given the audiologist one or two "red flags" as part of answers to other questions used in the standard process.

Giving a mental health screening tool to a client opens the door to having a conversation about mental health.

For some types of clients (e.g., implant clients), mental health screening tools could be given to the client before their appointment because of the severity level of their difficulties.

Audiologists probably would not use mental health screening tools on a client's first appointment.

Mental health screening tools can be administered during an appointment with the client and the audiologist.

The appropriateness of getting a client to complete a mental health screening tool may depend on what type of client it is (e.g., tinnitus vs. other).

Audiologists need to selectively choose which clients to screen for mental health issues as they should not be given to all clients (i.e., only those who are willing to be screened, etc.).

Audiologists may not want to administer a mental health screening tool on the basis of the client presenting with mental health signs/symptoms at one appointment.

Audiologists would administer mental health screening tools to clients if they identified a pattern of mental health signs/symptoms across multiple appointments.

Audiologists may choose to complete part of a mental health screening tool with a client, rather than the full screener.

Clients may not understand why they are being asked to fill out a mental health screening tool as part of an audiology appointment.

Clients may be more honest when completing a mental health screening tool if it is not in front of the audiologist.

Clients may not answer screening tools honestly because they do not want the audiologist to make a diagnosis.

Clients may not answer screening tools honestly because of the sensitive nature of the question (e.g., those about suicidality).

Audiologists should not push clients to complete screening tools or diagnose clients if the client is not willing to give information about their mental health.

Questions about more triggering topics (i.e., suicide) should be brief.

Having a client complete a mental health screening tool before attending an appointment may prevent the client from coming to the audiology clinic.

Audiologists can be taught how to administer mental health screening tools to clients

Audiologists require training for how to discuss the results of a mental health screening tool with clients
 Audiologists would find it challenging to discuss the results of mental health screening tools with clients.

Impact	Bidirectional relationship between hearing loss and poor mental health (6)	Mental health contributes to a person's hearing problems. The outcome of an audiology appointment and subsequent treatment outcomes can directly affect mental health, and vice versa.
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The outcome of an audiology appointment can directly impact a client's mental health.
 If the client is already struggling with mental health problems, they may not be as open to accepting positive treatment outcomes from an audiology appointment.
 Audiology treatment outcomes are affected by a client's mental health. Mental health information becomes more accessible to clients with hearing loss when their hearing is treated.
 Mental health contributes to a client's hearing problems.
 Mental health may or may not be the initial cause of a client's hearing problems.

Impact	Impact on a client's significant others (1)	A client's poor mental health impacts on their significant others.
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Significant others are impacted by the person's mental health symptoms

Providing support	General duty of care (2)	Once concerns around poor mental health are identified by the audiologist, there is further action required of them, and they must be aware of what their role in this instance is.
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If audiologists detect mental health signs and symptoms with their client, they need to follow through with this.
 Audiologists need to learn what to do with clients with mental health problems.

Providing support	Support currently provided in the audiological setting (11)	<p>There are a number of ways in which the audiology setting can provide support for their clients' poor mental health. It was considered whether clients could access support services within the audiology setting, rather than being referred to external sources. This may involve clinics having audiologists who are specialized in talking about psychological concerns with clients, particularly when these appear to stem from hearing loss.</p>
		<hr/> <p>Audiologists help people manage their mental health symptoms Audiologists help people become aware that their mental health concerns are treatable Clients may express to the clinic admin staff that they are unsure where to get help for mental health concerns. Audiologists can inform the client that they can support them from a hearing and a mental health side. Some clients may have had ineffective or negative experiences with trained mental health professionals that make them resistant to seeking help elsewhere beyond the audiologist Keeping clients in the same service (i.e., within the same audiology clinic) when mental health concerns are identified might be less daunting for clients Tinnitus triaging uses levels of symptom severity to determine if clients should be referred or sent to CBT before seeing an audiologist Audiology clinics could refer to clients to a colleague within the same clinic who has mental health training, rather than referring them to a different service. Audiology clinics could have audiologists who are specialised in talking about mental health concerns with clients Audiologists should give clients information about mental health if their concerns do not appear to be hearing related. Audiologists can ask clients if they have spoken to their GP about symptoms relating to hearing and mental health</p>

Providing support	Referring for psychological support (15)	Audiologists can refer on clients who are identified as having difficulties with poor mental health. This process may be in consultation with the client, and may involve the audiologist following up on whether the client took up the referral or not.
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	<p>It is an audiologist's duty of care to refer the client to the appropriate person for mental health problems.</p> <p>Audiologists should refer on if client's concerns do not appear to be hearing related.</p> <p>Clients are grateful when audiologists refer appropriately for mental health concerns</p> <p>Audiologists who are familiar with tinnitus triaging are already referring clients with obvious mental health symptoms to GPs/psychologists/counsellors</p> <p>Audiologists may decide with the client that a mental health referral is not necessary, after they have discussed the mental health symptoms.</p> <p>Clients do not necessarily want audiologists to refer them for a mental health assessment, even if they realise that they have a problem.</p> <p>Audiologists should refer back to GPs if the client is showing obvious mental health signs/symptoms</p> <p>Audiologist referring back to the GP may not be of benefit to the client (i.e., if GP is not supportive).</p> <p>If an audiologist only gives a referral and a contact for a psychologist to the client, the client may not want to take it.</p> <p>Audiologists may need to gain consent from the client to contact the psychologists directly for the client.</p> <p>Audiologists may need to assist clients to follow through on referrals made for mental health concerns (i.e. follow up with client).</p> <p>Audiologists can suggest that the client speaks to a mental health professional about mental health concerns</p> <p>Audiologists should suggest to or ask the client if they (the audiologist) can assist the client in getting further support from another health professional (i.e., making a referral to a psychologist or counsellor) to treat their mental health signs/concerns that were raised during an audiology appointment.</p> <p>Audiologists can inform the client that they may need support outside of the audiology clinic for things such as mental health.</p>
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			Audiologists can continue to suggest that the client seeks professional mental health support beyond themselves, even if the client has rejected this idea before.
Providing support	Collaboration with wider networks (11)	A client's mental health can be supported by their wider health network, in collaboration with audiologists. Audiology clinics should build relationships with mental health professionals (e.g., psychologists, counsellors), and establish referral bases between them.	
			<p>GPs help people manage mental health concerns</p> <p>Not all GPs are supportive of a client's mental health issues.</p> <p>GPs can have a positive impact on mental health for a client</p> <p>GPs help people become aware that mental health concerns are treatable</p> <p>Significant others (i.e., friends and family) can help the person manage mental health concerns</p> <p>GPs help to identify mental health concerns</p> <p>Allied health professionals help to identify mental health concerns</p> <p>Allied health professionals help to manage mental health concerns</p> <p>Allied health professionals help people become aware that mental health concerns are treatable</p> <p>Audiology clinics should build relationships with counsellors and psychologists around them.</p> <p>Referral bases between counsellors, psychologists and audiologists would be useful (e.g., for hearing and mental health issues to be referred between the two)</p>
Providing support	Clients appreciate detection (1)	Clients are grateful when audiologists detect concerns around poor mental health.	
			Clients are grateful when audiologists detect mental health concerns
Providing support	Communication within the audiology clinic team (4)	Staff within the audiology clinic team communicate client observations to each other using a variety of methods, including appointment notes.	
			<p>Clinic admin staff communicate client observations to audiologists in a variety of ways (i.e., alerts, appointment notes, speaking directly to them)</p> <p>Audiologists appreciate pre-appointment notes from clinic admin staff about how a client presented to the clinic.</p>

Clinic administration staff can and do put relevant observations (noticed via phone or in person) into appointment notes for audiologists
 There is good communication between admin staff, audiology clinic and management.

Barriers	Time constraints (8)	Audiologists may feel unable to meet the psychosocial support needs of their clients due to appointment time constraints. When audiologists are busy, they may miss signs that the client is struggling with poor mental health. Audiologists do not always know ahead of time that a client may require extra time.
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Audiologists are under time constraints when in appointment with clients. Audiologists can be very busy, and consequently not pay attention to signs that their client has mental health concerns
 Audiologists do not want to rush clients through a discussion about mental health.
 Mental health conversations between the client and audiologist take time. Audiologists feel unable to remove themselves from conversations about mental health with clients when the appointment time is up.
 Audiologists may not know ahead of time that a client may need extra time due to mental health issues.
 Due to time constraints, the audiologist may be unable to fulfil the mental health needs of the client in the allotted time.
 If audiologists do not meet the mental health needs of the client in the allotted time for the appointment, they feel guilt.

Barriers	Insufficient training (15)	Audiology clinic staff require more training to better identify and support clients who are struggling with poor mental health. This training could be organised by clinic managers.
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Audiologists cannot act in the place of a psychologist as they do not have the same level of training.
 Audiologists are not trained to have a conversation about mental health with a client that does not want to discuss these kinds of issues.
 Clinic admin staff need more training on how to navigate clients who are emotional (i.e., over the phone)

If mental health symptoms are not obvious to an audiologist, they may not be raised with a client
 Audiology clinic staff require more training to improve the detection of mental health signs.
 Audiologists may need to learn or revise knowledge about mental health (including mental health signs) to improve detection.
 Audiometrists need more mental health training than audiologists in terms of detecting mental health signs
 Audiologists need to learn how to discuss mental health with clients.
 Clinic managers should provide more training to audiology clinic staff regarding detection of mental health signs
 Looking for mental health signs (i.e., what they are and how to identify them) could be built into clinical training for audiologists
 Audiologists do not know that there are tools that they can use with clients regarding mental health concerns.
 Without mental health training, audiologists may not broach the topic of mental health in a way that is well received by the client.
 Audiology clinic teams do not always handle difficult clients to the best of their ability.
 There are often mental health issues with difficult clients
 If the client continues to reject seeking mental health support beyond the audiologist, the audiologist may feel unsure what else they can do beyond listening to the client.

Barriers	The hearing device-focussed nature of current audiological services (7)	Clients may not be aware that an audiologist can provide services beyond hearing. To improve this understanding, audiologists should inform others about the range of services they can offer, particularly those that go beyond what is typically associated with their role.	<p>There is a misperception about what audiologists do currently, and what they are capable of doing. Audiology clinics can inform the public about all of the things that they can do. Audiologists can provide more for people than just hearing. Audiologists can clarify that their primary role is to help with hearing, but that they can help the client access other support services if needed. Clients might only attend audiology appointments for hearing</p>
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Clients may not understand that audiologists can provide things outside of hearing.

Clients may not understand why audiology clinics are asking about anything that does not appear to be directly relevant to hearing.

Barriers	Perceived consequences of initiating discussion about mental health (11)	There are some risks associated with raising concerns around poor mental health with the client. Consequences may include the client reacting adversely (i.e., feel offended, embarrassed, disengage with clinic), and attention being taken away from focus of the appointment.
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Mental health concerns raised in an audiology appointment may continue to play on the client's mind after leaving an appointment.
Mental health concerns raised in an audiology appointment may make the person think that they have a problem.
When audiology clinic staff detect mental health signs in adults with hearing loss they risk the client feeling offended.
When audiology clinic staff detect mental health signs in adults with hearing loss they risk the client feeling embarrassed
When audiology clinic staff detect mental health signs in adults with hearing loss, the person may disengage with the audiology clinic.
Audiologists bringing up mental health concerns with a client may cause the person to not want to come back and see the audiologist anymore (i.e., to avoid discussing it further).
Audiologists are unsure whether discussion during an appointment has actually led to the client not wanting to see them again.
Asking about mental health in an appointment is unlikely to deter a client from continuing to attend.
If an audiologist brings up mental health concerns with a client, it may remove their focus away from the initial purpose of the appointment.
Audiologists would not say to a client that they thought that the client had mental health issues (e.g., depression) because they are worried that it would be perceived as rude or embarrassing to the client.
Even if the client does not answer honestly to more triggering mental health questions, it is unlikely that they would be offended by being asked if it was done in a sensitive manner.

Barriers	Inadequate clinical processes (10)	<p>Current processes do not always identify clients with poor mental health. This could be improved by providing audiologists with reminders to look out for mental health signs, maintaining continuity of care, and completing consistent triaging processes for filtering out or referring on clients who present with primary concerns around poor mental health. Improvements could be made to the process of communicating client observations made by admin staff to audiologists in the form of appointment notes and case notes.</p>
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	<p>Audiologists could be provided with reminders of what mental health signs are and that they should look out for them so that this is kept at the forefront of their minds.</p> <p>There is no consistency or formal process in place for how relevant observations made by clinic staff are communicated to audiologists</p> <p>Audiologists often do not read or they may miss client notes made by clinic admin staff before seeing a client (especially if it is not flagged in some way, or if it is in the communication section of a client's file).</p> <p>Clinic admin staff do not know if their appointment notes, alerts or information verbally communicated to the audiologist filters down to the client's case notes</p> <p>Clinic admin staff should pass on relevant observed signs/behaviours to the audiologist (i.e., observed before/after appointments)</p> <p>Clinic admin's observations may not make it from the appointment notes to the case history notes of a client (i.e., due to clinic admin staff not being able to write these directly).</p> <p>Audiologists should add observations made by clinic admin staff to the client notes where relevant</p> <p>The process of clinic admin staff making pre-appointment notes regarding relevant client observations that the audiologist then sees should be formalised.</p> <p>Audiologists should maintain continuity of care to assist with detecting changes (sometimes subtle) in a client's mental health over time</p>
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Tinnitus triaging is not completed by every client meaning that clients who have mental health symptoms do not always get filtered out or referred on for mental health concerns before coming to an audiology appointment

Staff self-care	Support for audiology clinic staff (8)	Audiology clinic staff may require support and assistance from clinic managers when dealing with clients with psychological concerns. Staff need to communicate these needs to the clinic manager as they arise.
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Clinic staff should be provided with coping strategies for themselves to use as well.

Clinic managers should provide support and assistance to audiology clinic staff when they are faced with emotional/challenging clients (i.e., facilitate debriefings).

Clinic managers would like to think that they are always really supportive of staff who have dealt with distressed clients.

Clinic managers need to be made aware if and when audiology clinic staff are being affected by the mental health issues of their clients.

Clinic managers would like audiology clinic teams to know that they (the audiology clinic team) have the tools needed to emotionally deal with the after effects of distressing clients.

Difficult clients need to be dealt with by the clinic manager (i.e., they will speak with the client).

When audiology clinic staff have dealt with a difficult client, they will speak to the clinic manager.

Working in a hearing clinic is an emotional job
