Dual Sensory Loss in Older Adults

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Webinar for the Fall Prevention Community of Practice

April 2018
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In 1989, a group of motivated parents lobbied the Ontario government as advocates for their deafblind children in an attempt to secure funding for community-based supported living programs.

On April 6, 1989, we were incorporated as a not-for-profit organization.
DeafBlind Ontario Services
What is “sensory loss”?

An inability or decreased ability to respond to stimuli that affect our senses

- 95% of the information about the world around us comes from our hearing and sight.
- Medical conditions and aging can impact on the senses
- Vision and hearing impairments are among the most common age-related conditions affecting the elderly.
- Sensory processing disorder is a condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses

NHS Scotland
Vision and hearing loss are particularly prominent in the older adult population. While vision loss has a negative impact on a person's perception of the world, hearing loss diminishes a person's mode of communication and can lead to social isolation. A combined loss of vision and hearing will present a new level of challenge. It can compound the difficulties an older adult may have.

MA Rooth - North Carolina medical journal, 2017
Seniors with dual sensory loss also face

- an increased safety risk
- they may lose the ability to see barriers at home or while they are moving through public spaces and to hear people in their path, putting them at increased risk of falls.

In addition, vision problems are known to

- increase the risk of falling by impairing balance
- reducing the ability to perceive distances and spatial relationships

Understanding age-related dual sensory loss  Robin Arnott
Impact on Quality of Life

- Communication
- Social Isolation
- Mobility, Activities of Daily Living
- Health and safety
- Mental Health/Depression
- Cognitive impact
How Prevalent is Dual Sensory Loss in Ontario?

- Of 311,104 seniors who accessed health services (LTC/HC) in Ontario 70,080 experience a dual sensory loss.*

- Of those experiencing dual sensory loss, 23,578 or 22.7% were living in long term care homes in Ontario.*

- And 46,502 seniors or 22.4% with dual sensory loss were receiving home care services in Ontario.*

* Source: Canadian Institute of Health Information (2016-17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSL</th>
<th>14-15 (LTC)</th>
<th>15-16 (LTC)</th>
<th>16-17 (LTC)</th>
<th>14-15(HC)</th>
<th>15-16(HC)</th>
<th>16-17(HC)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impaired</td>
<td>13,404</td>
<td>13,307</td>
<td>13,215</td>
<td>27,220</td>
<td>30,455</td>
<td>32,038</td>
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<td>Moderately impaired</td>
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<td>4,269</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>7,804</td>
<td>8,528</td>
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<td>Highly impaired</td>
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<td>4,387</td>
<td>4,724</td>
<td>3,802</td>
<td>4,146</td>
<td>4,291</td>
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<tr>
<td>Severely impaired</td>
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<td>1,148</td>
<td>1,239</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>1,560</td>
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<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>23,175</td>
<td>23,111</td>
<td>23,578</td>
<td>40,165</td>
<td>44,572</td>
<td>46,502</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Canadian Institute of Health Information (2014-2015 – 2016-17)
Causes of Vision Loss

- Cataracts
- Diabetic Retinopathy
- Glaucoma
- Macular Degeneration
- Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Stroke
Cataracts

Visibility Au.
Diabetic Retinopathy

Visibility Au.
Glaucoma

Visability Au.
Macular Degeneration
Stroke

Fork in the Road Vision Rehabilitation Services
Causes of hearing loss

- Genetics/hereditary
- Viral causes (e.g. meningitis)
- Menieres Disease
- Age related (presbyacausis)
- Industrial and noise induced
- Tinnitus
- Stroke

A recent study done by Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the National Institute of Aging found that hearing loss significantly increases the risk of falls for older people.
Why?
What can we do?

Wear glasses and hearing aids, make sure vision and hearing tests are up to date.

Exercise regularly – improve balance and coordination.

Utilize railings and other mobility aids.

Enquire about medications that may cause dizziness.
You build a ramp for someone with mobility challenges...

How do you make an area accessible for someone with dual sensory loss?
Improving lighting in the home not only makes it easier to carry out everyday activities but can also reduce risks of falls.

As we get older, we need even more light in our homes – usually about 10 per cent more each decade. Centre for Sight Enhancement

**Natural light**
- inconsistent
- sometimes it needs to be controlled.
- may cause glare
- window blinds can help control lighting degree and direction.

**Electric lighting**
- comes in many forms and can be regulated i.e. motion sensors or dimmers
- indirect lighting creates a more diffused lighting source and prevent glare

**Task lighting**
- directs light where it is needed most for detailed activities
Although many people who have low vision can also experience decreased color and depth perception, it is still possible to use color to enhance independence, safety, and accessibility.
Organization

- Avoid clutter
- Be consisted with placing of items when storing
- Place more frequently used appliances close to hand
- Develop regular routines
Accessible Design Resource

The Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss is an essential resource if you are a builder, member of an accessibility committee or government agency, or work in a recreation centre, nursing home or other facility. The guide includes a DIY (Do-it-Yourself) section to improve accessibility in environments used by any individual with sensory loss.

Download your FREE copy of the Accessibility Guidelines for Sensory Loss here! - PDF Document (5.4 MB)
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Questions?

Type your questions into the chat box.

OR

Dial *7 on your telephone to unmute.
Dial *6 when you are finished speaking to re-mute.

THIS WEBINAR IS BEING RECORDED.
THE SLIDE DECK AND RECORDING WILL BE EMailed AFTER THE WEBINAR.
WE INFORM, SHARE IDEAS AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EVIDENCE-INFORMED FALL PREVENTION PRACTICES.

**NETWORKING**
Find an expert, mentor or collaborator. Search members by area of expertise, location or name.

**FINDING ANSWERS**
Harness the collective knowledge of our members to find an answer to your fall prevention question quickly and efficiently.

**WORKING TOGETHER**
Collaboration tools & private groups make working together online easy. Bring your network, committee or project team to Loop today.

Thank you for attending!

**STAY IN THE LOOP!** [WWW.FALLSLOOP.COM](http://WWW.FALLSLOOP.COM)