

# Implementing a Sensory Enhancement Project Across a Health System

Jennifer Bierbaum, DNP, APRN-CNS, AGCNS-BC, CENP, GERO-BC;  
Nadine Henry-Thomas, DNP, MSN-Ed, CMSRN, PCCN

NICHE + Nebraska Methodist Hospital Regional Geriatric  
Nursing Conference

1

## Questions

- How many times in your practice do you wish for a device to assist in the communication with your older adult patient/s?
- How many times did you assess your patient to be dependent? Bedfast? Required moderate to maximum assist?
- How many times did you need to investigate the loss of glasses, hearing aids or dentures?
- How many times did you refer a patient for physical/occupational therapy consult then realized that the patient can mobilize with an assistive device?

2

## Learning Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of sensory impairment in the older adult's quality of life.
2. Evaluate sensory enhancement project outcomes.
3. Assess feasibility of a sensory enhancement project.

3

## Focus

- What is Sensory Impairment?
- Sensory impairment in the older adult has a direct impact on quality of life.
- Sensory impairments can also lead to an increased risk of developing dementia.

4

## Our locations

From central Maryland to northern Virginia to the heart of Washington, D.C., we have over 300 healthcare locations ready to provide the high-quality care you need.

### Baltimore:

MFSMC  
MHH  
MUMH  
MGSB

### Washington D.C.

MWHC  
MGUH  
MSMH

### Central/Southern Maryland:

MMMC  
MSMHC  
MSMH



Urgent Care



Primary Care



Physical Therapy



Hospitals

5

## Method

# Sensory and mobility aides

On in the morning. Near at night.



Mobility Devices:

\_\_\_\_\_



Hearing Aides

Right

Left

  
  


Eye Glasses



Dentures

Upper

Lower

  
  

Room: \_\_\_\_\_



6

**MedStar NICHE Champion Audit Tool**

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Audit unit once per week using the tool below and send to Lisa Leyrer ([Lisa.leyrer@medstar.net](mailto:Lisa.leyrer@medstar.net)). May place audits in Lisa's Mailbox.

	Patient is ≥ 65 years old	Sensory & Mobility Aid Sign is available in the room	Sensory & Mobility Aid Sign is completed accurately	Patient has appropriate container(s) to protect & place sensory aids
Patient Optio Label	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No
Patient Optio Label	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No	Yes / No

- All 10 MSH acute care entities piloted on at least one identified NICHE unit from April 1 through April 30, 2024.

**Method**

- Entities reported outcomes from the pilot in June 2024.
- Audits were conducted by identified GRNs for utilization of signage.

7

**Results**

- Increased documentation related to the utilization of sensory devices such as hearing aids, eyeglasses, and dentures was noted.
- These devices we also noted to be more frequently accounted for upon discharge (cost savings).

**Unanticipated Positive Outcomes**

- Hospitals also experienced an increase in nurse communication with discharge surveys.
- Improved nurse and patient communication on patient and nurse satisfaction survey.

8

## Discussion/Nursing Implications

- Improving awareness and understanding of sensory devices is crucial to providing quality care and maintaining dignity during an acute care hospitalization.
- Decreases in delirium and increases in quality of life are key performance indicators (KPIs).
- A sensory improvement project can augment the processes for KPI achievement.

9

## References

- Tseng, YC., Liu, S.HY., Lou, MF. et al. Quality of life in older adults with sensory impairments: a systematic review. *Qual Life Res* 27, 1957–1971 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11136-018-1799-2>.
- Völter C, Thomas JP, Maetzler W, Guthoff R, Grunwald M, Hummel T. Sensory Dysfunction in Old Age. *Dtsch Arztebl Int.* 2021 Jul 26;118(29-30):512-520. doi: 10.3238/arztebl.m2021.0212. PMID: 34158149; PMCID: PMC8476826.
- Correia C, Lopez KJ, Wroblewski KE, Huisingh-Scheetz M, Kern DW, Chen RC, Schumm LP, Dale W, McClintock MK, Pinto JM. Global Sensory Impairment in Older Adults in the United States. *J Am Geriatr Soc.* 2016 Feb;64(2):306-313. doi: 10.1111/jgs.13955. PMID: 26889840; PMCID: PMC4808743.

10

## Questions

Nadine Henry-Thomas, DNP, MSN-Ed, CMSRN, PCCN

- Director of Nursing
- Tower 4. Cardiac/Tele.
- MFSMC
- Email: Nadine.Henry-Thomas@medstar.net
- Office: 443-777-7006

Jennifer F. Bierbaum, DNP, APRN-CNS, AGCNS-BC, CENP, GERO-BC

- Director of Nursing Practice and Innovation
- Center of Nursing Excellence
- MSMHC
- Email: jennifer.bierbaum@medstar.net
- Office: 301-877-5854