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Caregiving and Connection, Peace of Mind for the Hearing Aid Wearer and the Caregiver with the HearShare App

Presenter: Dr. Michelle Hurley, Senior Education and
Training Audiologist

Hello, everyone, and welcome to Caregiving and Connection, Peace of Mind for the Hearing Aid Wearer and the caregiver with the HearShare app. I'm your host for today's Starkey event, Dr. Michelle Hurley, and I'm a Senior Education and Training Audiologist. I think this is such a timely subject, and I look forward to sharing some details about, I think, the why behind the HearShare app, and how easy it is to navigate. So before we get started, we'll go through just a couple of housekeeping notes.

There is an opportunity if you have a question, to post that in the Q&A, and I will provide an answer before the end of the session. We do have a handout for today's course; you can get that handout either in the resources area within your account on Audiology Online, or it's also posted in the chat area for you to access right here in the classroom. You can earn a continuing education credit for today's session if you remain logged in for the entire time, and pass the short quiz that will be available at the completion of the course. It also requires that you are a member of the Audiology Online CEU access process, so that's definitely something that is available for you if you are a member.

If you do need any technical support throughout the session, you can access Audiology Online via email, use the Q&A section, or also contact them through the 800 number that you see posted here on the FAQ site. I'll give you just a moment to get that information jotted down, if necessary. We have risks and benefits that are available for you to review at your leisure for the course; they're also part of the handout. My goal today is for you, the attendees, to be able to identify the health and wellness information that can be shared with a caregiver via the HearShare app, to be able to describe the setup process for the HearShare app, and then to be able to identify two benefits of the HearShare app for patients and caregivers.

So let's go ahead and get started. I mentioned I think this is a very timely subject, thinking about caregiving and the role that a simple mobile app can play in terms of being able to share some really critical information. This can help maintain that connection between caregiver and the individual wearing our Starkey hearing aids. This is such an important topic as we think about today's world where there are so many individuals that are caring for others in that elder population, and that's just going to continue to grow. We know, as hearing professionals, that hearing loss plays a really key role in the decline of both social and physical activity.

By the time that the hearing loss is really kind of suspected or can't be denied any longer, that individual, before they've come into our office, they've probably already started to adjust their lifestyles around that hearing loss. That can be withdrawing from social activities that they once enjoyed, staying in their home more, spending less time on their feet, and getting less exercise. All of those things can play a heightened risk for falls. We know that as we're moving less, we're getting less muscle tone, and we also know that that social withdrawal can play a really important role in depression, isolation, and even cognitive concerns. This may be very

familiar to you as you're working with this population.

When we think about the caregiver, the loved ones, those support members that are potentially joining your patient as they come in for their appointments, or that we want to join those appointments, I think they're a really critical part of the success of that patient on the hearing journey. The reason why is because they're the ones that see that individual on a daily basis. They're the ones that know that individual best and very often, they have the greatest understanding of the impact that the hearing loss is having on that individual itself. So, I think it's really important for us as the hearing professional to stress the importance through our front office staff and their messaging as they're scheduling appointments, to ensure that that companion, that loved one, that caregiver, is there for the appointment.

They're the ones, again, that know that individual the best, and so very often, they'll be able to provide some really valuable information that sometimes the prospective patient is maybe a little more hesitant to share for many number of reasons. We're reminded that they might not even really be aware of the impact that that hearing loss is having on those around them. So, I think they're a very, very important part of this journey and a real ally when we think about our role in guiding that hearing journey. I think it's really interesting when we look at the after-effect of amplification and the data around the difference between the patient's perspective and the family's perspective, or the caregiver's perspective, considering the improvement with hearing instruments.

The family members often tend to see more improvement than the patient does, which I think is somewhat surprising, but if we kind of step back and think about it, maybe not so much. They're the ones that are spending a significant time with that individual, and they're seeing firsthand the benefits that hearing aids can provide, even if it's just turning the volume down on the TV, for example. From the patient's perspective, it's likely that they don't see the scope of how large that improvement may be. The hearing loss very likely was gradual onset, so it's just sort of become something that they're dealing with, and so they don't see that vast improvement quite so easily.

Very often that family member is the one that sees the improvements in relationships and the time spent together is more effective and more meaningful because of that ability to be communicating has been improved. So I think it's very important for us, again, to think about that partnership with the caregiver. They're going to be a key in ensuring that that individual is wearing the hearing aids, is keeping the hearing aids, and being reminded consistently of the benefits. That's of course, very important when we think about the ultimate success of these instruments on that individual.

So, you're not only just taking care of the patient when you look at that patient journey itself, you're really taking care of the caregiver and those around them by improving that quality of life through better hearing. As we think about today's population, we know that individuals, as they age, are living longer. The age 65 and older is actually the largest growing demographic in the United States today, and I think that carries forward globally. So, we know that since

individuals are living longer, that also means that caregiving population is probably going to grow quite dramatically as well.

Very often we have individuals in middle age and maybe early, older age, that are part of that caregiving role. And it's a very important role; it can mean great satisfaction for the individual that is performing it, strengthening those relationships with those individuals that they're caring for. But it can also impact the caregiver in a number of ways, you know, maybe impacting their ability to work and maintain their social interaction, and also can play a key role in their physical and mental health as well. So let's take a little bit of a closer look at the caregiver and why they're such an important part of this, and one that we really need to protect their well-being just as much as we do the individual that we're delivering that better hearing for.

When we think about, statistically, in the caregiving population, most often they're family, not always, but that's the largest segment. Very often they're female, and they're spending a significant amount of their time during their own week dedicating that to the person that they're caring for. On average, they're spending about 24 hours a week doing that caregiving role. These are things that, of course, we would expect that we might be concerned about in terms of making sure that errands are run, helping to take care of finances, getting them to medical appointments, and surprisingly, 15% of the typical caregivers are actually doing this in some sort of long-distance capacity.

So, we may anticipate that a caregiver is 5 minutes away from the person they're looking after, but they may be 5 states or even 5 countries away in today's world. When we think about the responsibility that that caregiver carries, it's quite significant, very often because they're what we now term the sandwich generation. They're right there in the middle, taking care of those loved ones or individuals that they care about that are older than them, as well as, very often, children and family members within their own nuclear group as well. That's a lot to handle, and we're going to expect this population to grow dramatically because of the fact that age 65 and older is the largest segment of the demographic in today's society in the United States.

So we hear the term aging in place a lot, and AARP actually defines it as that ability to live in one's own home or community, and being able to do it safely, independently, and comfortably through that aging process. The concept really is about adapting that home and community so that, from a community perspective, we can meet the older individuals' changing needs. We want to make sure that we can ensure that they're going to have access to the necessary services and support systems, and we need to make that community more livable for people of all ages. So as you look around at the community around you, where you're located, what do you think about that from the perspective of being prepared for the changing needs of this growing, aging population?

I think it's a really interesting way that we have to start looking at our communities as a whole. This is a really great quote from somebody who really is an expert in the elder care population, an author by the name of Joe Laverde, and she wrote a book called *Who Will Take*

Care of Me When I'm Old? and it's a really good read, I think very valuable for caregivers, as well as the individuals who are living in that elder population. She mentions that everybody says they want to age in place, but nobody really knows how to. I think that's very important to think about it from that perspective, with people living longer.

In generations past, that wasn't something that really happened as much, and so thinking about that community-wide and is the home prepared, a lot of that really didn't have to happen like it needs to in today's world. So when I think about technology, what role can it play in the process of aging in place? There was a really great study in 2023 from *U.S. News & World Report* that surveyed seniors on that concept of aging in place with the help of technology. Two thousand adults age 55 and older were part of the survey, and they were asked about how they were using, or plan to use, devices to help them through the aging in place process.

Well, 93% of the respondents actually agreed that aging in place was an important goal for them, so I think, again, that translates into what we were just talking about. The study found that 53% of those respondents used some type of assistive or health-related technologies. That can be anywhere from accessing mobile apps, which we know continue to grow dramatically in that healthcare or medical space. An area that I think is growing dramatically is that service-related apps and use of those types of technologies for grocery, home products, pharmaceutical deliveries, health trackers, whether that's a wearable device, whether that's part of a mobile app, and we also see, of course, our area of emphasis, hearing assistance, as part of that.

These are the devices that can make that aging in place process more easy to navigate. And 88% of the respondents in this study found that assistive or health-related technologies did improve their quality of life. So we really are seeing that this can provide that assistance, that ease of living that may greatly improve quality of life, and of course, better hearing plays a key role in that as well. Also, it can provide a great sense of independence. More than half of the study respondents, 55%, felt like it gave them that sense of independence to tap into the use of these technologies.

So I think, when we think about hearing instruments in particular, most of them are quite expensive, so it's very important as we're having these conversations with the patient, with those loved ones and companions, that we can show them the WIFA, the what's in it for them. This is important not only for the individual with the hearing loss but also those around them that are going to be dealing with that individual on an ongoing basis, and again, can be maybe the greatest recipient of that improvement in better hearing. So I think it's important for us to demonstrate how better hearing and better living can not only deliver that communication capability but also help that individual maintain their independence. And some of the resources that we have as hearing professionals can use that hearing instrument itself as a space to help with that connection.

That's where HearShare comes in from Starkey's perspective. This is a mobile app that we

developed specifically to support the health and wellness through connectivity, and relating it specifically to the caregiver. This was designed for them in particular. So really, when we think about that WIFM, what's in it from the patient's perspective? Well, we're tapping into a device that we hope that they are wearing on a very regular basis throughout the course of their day, and so this can be a very non-intrusive way for tracking of their health and safety, as well as their better hearing process.

In turn, this may help them maintain that independence, because that caregiver has a way to kind of look after them a little bit more remotely. It really allows them to access support as needed or desired. This minimizes that sort of "helicopter role" that maybe some caregivers feel that they're having to take on, and some patients may resent. That caregiver can stay informed in that non-intrusive way. They can access this information at any time from literally anywhere around the globe, and they can even set up notifications on specific items that may be important for them in regards to that loved one that they are taking care of, and we'll take a closer look at that here in just a minute.

I think the biggest benefit when we think about both the patient and the caregiver is peace of mind. This is just knowing that that loved one is healthy and safe. From the patient's perspective, knowing that someone will be maybe a little bit more aware of what's going on, I think is very, very critical when we think about that independence and peace of mind. What's the WIFM for us as the healthcare provider? Well, I think that it's important to see that there are benefits for you as well. Recommending an app such as this, I think plays a key role in patient satisfaction.

We're looking at that patient and their life experience very holistically, including that caregiver, and all of that is a big, critical piece of that patient's success. Information that is being viewed may help that caregiver step in, maybe if the device is not connected or doesn't seem to be working, and maybe do something about that, and that can minimize unnecessary appointments on our part. All of this, again, playing a part of that process can help maintain satisfaction, which in turn reduces return rates with technologies. I think it also can be part of that value package that can encourage your patient towards the purchase of more advanced technology that's going to provide a more global benefit for them.

When we first introduced this caregiver app, it was known as Thrive Care, and as we have evolved with technology, we have changed that name to HearShare. This is the app specifically that was designed to help that hearing aid wearer maintain that independence by connecting with their caregivers. The app is found in the app stores, and it is a free download through both Apple and Android. It supports not only our most current technology, Edge AI, as well as anything that may be coming around the corner, but also Genesis AI, Evolve AI, and all the way back to the Livio Edge AI technologies. We've been working with the app for quite some time, and continuing to update that as technology and needs change.

When we look at it from a perspective of how it can share information that might support that patient, we can take a look at that connection. What are their battery levels? Are both aids

connected? How are they using the devices? Are they interacting with other individuals in various environments? What about health and wellness? We can track that information, and it can be really key to recognize, as, you know, has mom gotten up and moved like she is supposed to today, especially if she's rehabbing from that hip replacement or something? It also gives us that ability to set up notifications, so we can keep track of status of that patient.

It's part of the communication between the MyStarkey app that the patient uses with their hearing aids, and the HearShare app that the caregiver is going to utilize. So let's take a look at how easy it is to set this HearShare app up. It all really starts out in the My Starkey app, because we're going to be sharing that information from the hearing aids through that app to the HearShare app itself. Where this is going to begin is on the home screen of the My Starkey app, and accessing that health icon is where the information lives for us to be able to invite a caregiver as that hearing aid wearer.

As we show this short video of accessing that health area, we're going to scroll through those three options at the top so we can access the Set Up a Caregiver option. We tap that option to add a caregiver, and what we're going to be needing is name as well as email address for that individual, and then when we hit send, it's going to send an invitation via email. They will be able to access and agree to be a caregiver for this individual. The hearing aid wearer of any of those models of Starkey products that I talked about will be able to utilize this app and do that with an unlimited number of caregivers, and those caregivers can be anywhere in the world.

One of the newer elements of the HearShare app that starts, again, in the My Starkey app is known as Share Home Location. This is the ability to be able to add and share a home location that is going to be passed on to that HearShare user, the caregiver. This does require that the individual with the MyStarkey app has an account login and creation. It's possible now to bypass that, so if they did, initially, they would have to go ahead and create or add that account. It also requires that location services is on for the hearing aid wearer.

Where we can access that area to enter this information is through the More icon on the home screen of the app. So we'll go to More, we'll access App Settings. Home location setting is a new option there, and that is where we would enter that address information and be able to send out those updates. Now, it's important to know from the perspective of the share home location, that it is not tracking where the user goes. It doesn't say that so-and-so went to the racetrack, or the restaurant, or the movie theater.

It just lets that caregiver know that they are outside of that 100-foot, roughly, Bluetooth range that would be known as home for that individual based on that address. The status does update every 15 minutes, so it's very similar to geotagging and where we look at that distance, which is roughly 100 meters or so from the Bluetooth perspective. So we can see, as we are inviting that caregiver, that they also have a choice of options that they can select to share. So they control the messaging.

If they don't want to share certain information related to activity, for example, they could refrain from doing that. The same would be true for that home address. So, they choose what they want to share, with each individual caregiver. I mentioned the app as a free download for both Apple and Android. When that email is accessed, it's going to allow that individual, once they've affirmed that they want to be a caregiver, either access the app that they previously have downloaded, or go ahead and download that HearShare app.

Then as they walk through the app, they're going to be accepting that invite with the code that is provided in that email, and they'll be able to select that they want to accept that invitation. That makes them a caregiver that's part of the HearShare experience. So if you've worked with HearShare, even back to when it was Thrive Care, you'll notice that there are a number of updates. Certainly that location on Home and Away is one of those. But we've also done some updates with the home screen to really enhance sort of the visual aspect of this, and provide easier access to information at a glance, which may be really helpful for those caregivers.

When we think about what this really can provide, it becomes actionable information. It gives that caregiver some information that may facilitate conversations and more interaction between them as we examine, you know, maybe what is coming up on HearShare that prompts those conversations. So let's take a little bit of a deeper look at the home screen from today's perspective as we've updated that. You'll see that we've got that patient information at the top: the name, the battery status.

Also, that home and away status, if that was engaged. I think it's really helpful when we think about that battery status. We may see that Dad's only been wearing one hearing instrument, that may prompt that call about what's going on with that other one, is that something we need to intercede with? We'll also see that we've added some information in terms of insights around various aspects of the app: the physical activity, the social interaction, and that information is color-coded, which can be really helpful as well. It's also possible to expand that view and take a closer look at certain areas, and to be able to dive a little bit deeper into some of the aspects of the HearShare app.

When we think about that home and away, again, we're not tracking that patient location, we're just indicating that they are away from that home area. That, again, is available because of geotagging, and that information will be refreshed every 15 minutes. We have to set that up in the MyStarkey app; that is not set up at all in the HearShare app. When we think about that home screen, and there's 3 simple screens with HearShare, so it's a very, very simple app. The insights and goals open up some areas that may be beneficial when we think about that sort of connection.

This lets us know, are they meeting the goals that maybe we know they need to meet, because of maybe a physical therapy? Are they wearing the devices as we want them to, in terms of number of hours, as was specified by their hearing professional, as they're beginning to wear their devices? Or are they on track to ultimately meet that goal at the end of the day,

or even behind? Again, this may give us information that may prompt those connections and those communications with the caregiver and hearing aid wearer. If we want to take a closer look at details of a selected goal, we can dive a little bit deeper.

We've really provided some expansion into that window, and taking a look at those insights. And we can look at that for those various categories of social, physical. We can look at the hearing report in terms of how they've been wearing the devices, how many hours, what types of environments. That becomes a really important window. We can do this either daily or weekly, so we can break that down however it's meaningful for us as that particular caregiver.

If we want to take a look at today, we can look at the details of their hearing aid usage, for example, from today's perspective. We'll also take a look at social activity and sound levels that they've been exposed to as well, which I think is quite interesting. When we think about HearShare, as I mentioned, it's a three-screen app, very, very simple. You've got the home screen, you've got those notifications that will populate and let you know if goals have been missed or met, if that has been established. And then the More screen gives you that ability to always kind of personalize the account a little bit. It is very simple and very straightforward, and a very easy app for any caregiver of a Starkey hearing aid wearer to be able to utilize.

As I wrap up, just a couple of tips and tricks. When we think about the patient's perspective, they're the one that invites that caregiver, so they're always in control of who they want to invite and what that messaging will be. As I mentioned, they can have an unlimited number of caregivers who can be anywhere in the world. The MyStarkey app does need to be open, at least in the background, on the hearing aid wearer's phone for the HearShare app information to be shared. So it's important that we educate them to not close out that app.

The patient does need to be signed into that cloud account, so again, they will have to have had set up that account and be connected to the internet for the HearShare information to be shared between the MyStarkey app and the HearShare app. On the caregiver side, they have to accept that invite. So, there's a conscious choice on their part as well. They can refresh that app very easily, just pull down the screen and refresh that. They don't get notifications of falls for an individual who does have our fall alert system established.

They are not going to be notified in terms of taking action, but they would be notified that a fall occurred. So that may be very beneficial if you're the child that lives half a world away that may prompt that communication with your sibling, for example, that is that more closely aligned caregiver that's also a fall contact for that hearing aid wearer. The caregiver doesn't have to be signed into the cloud, but you do have to have cellular signal and data to be able to be getting that information.

In summary, I hope that you see that this app is really a simple design, really designed for that caregiver to be able to maintain that connection. It's designed to help that hearing aid wearer maintain that independent lifestyle that very often they desire, and share very pertinent information that can relate to better hearing, safety, and better physical activity for that

hearing aid wearer. I have some simple resources for the information that I shared today that will, again, be part of that handout that you can reference at your leisure. And I want to thank you again for joining me today. It's great to have an opportunity to speak to you about something that I think is so meaningful as being part of that population who's looking after aging parents, myself. I definitely see the importance of this type of technology. So thank you, and I look forward to seeing you at a future Starkey event.