

Dilemmatic group memberships of hard-of-hearing employees during the process of acquiring and adapting to the use of hearing aids

Oral presentation

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The presentation describes how hard-of-hearing (HOH) employees renegotiate both their existing and new group memberships when they acquire and begin to use hearing aids. Our research setting was longitudinal and we performed a theory-informed qualitative analysis of multiple qualitative data. When a person discovers that they have a hearing problem and acquire a hearing aid, their group memberships undergo change. First, hard-of-hearing (HOH) employees need to start negotiating their relationship with the HOH group. Second, they need to consider whether they see themselves as members of the disabled or the non-disabled employee group. This negotiation tends to be context-bound, situational and non-linear as a process, involving a back-and-forth movement in the way in which HOH employees value different group memberships. The dilemmatic negotiation of new group memberships and the other social aspects involved in hearing aid rehabilitation tend to remain invisible to rehabilitation professionals, occupational health care and employers.