

## HELP WANTED: Assistants for Some AuD Jobs

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### Bio

- Hearing Instrument Specialist
- Western Michigan University – B.S.
  - Major - Speech Pathology and Audiology
  - Minor - Biological Sciences
- Ohio State University – Au.D.
  - Specialization – neuroscience
- Hearing & Balance Center
- Multi-specialty Practice
  - Audiology, ENT, SLP, PT
- Private Practice - Great Lakes Audiology



## Today's Talk

- How the use of support personnel can improve workflow, reduce costs, and extend audiology services
- Proposed candidacy, training, and supervision requirements for audiology assistants in Ohio
- Ways audiology assistants can be effectively incorporated into everyday practice

## The Life of an Audiologist

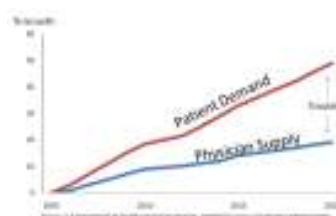
- A juggling act

## Upcoming AuD Terrain

- Challenges of a changing landscape
  - Demand for services
    - Aging “Boomer” demographic
    - 38M → 48M w/HL over next 20 years (~26% increase)
    - BLS predicts 21% job outlook, 2016-2026
    - Audiologist workforce is not growing
      - 600 new; 400 retire/die/disabled; 240 leave voluntarily (Windmill & Freeman, 2013)
  - Health Care
    - Reform → improved care at lower cost
    - Reducing reimbursement by 3<sup>rd</sup> parties
  - Outside forces
    - PSAPs, OTC HAs, Consumer Electronics
    - HAS, Retail/Wholesale, Pharmacy chains, Internet
    - TPAs

## Navigating the Path Ahead

- Disruption and change
  - Who will meet the demand?
    - Hearing Aid Dealers?
    - “Quasiologists”? (Liebe, 2014)
  - “adapt and overcome (or die)”
  - Netflix or Blockbuster (Dr. Kim Cavitt)
- Dealing with Change
  - Accept, Learn, Evolve, Succeed
  - Don’t do it alone...get HELP



## Getting Help

- Image of help

## Defining an Assistant

- Merriam-Webster
  - a person who assists someone : HELPER
- Synonyms : helper, deputy, second-in-command, number two, right-hand man/woman, aide, adjunct, junior, auxiliary
- Audiologists are “the highest authority” in the field of hearing and balance (C. Goodman, circa 2004)
- We are helping professionals, but even we can benefit from help

## Assistants

- Famous examples
- Why do we need assistants?
  - Help us achieve goals
  - Save Time/Money
  - Keep our Sanity

## Assisting Other Professions

- **Optometry – opticians, technicians, assistants**
- **Dental – hygienists, assistants**
- **Veterinary – technologist, technicians, assistants**
- Physician – NP, PA, MA
- Accounting
- Law - paralegal
- Nursing Assistant (STNA)
- PT/OT Assistant
- Personal Assistant
- Coaching

## Optometry Support Personnel

	2017 median pay*	Education Training	Notes
Optometrist	~\$110k (\$53/hr)	DO	4 optometric staff/OD (Freeman, 2014)
Optician	~\$36k (\$17/hr)	On-the-job; Certificate; Associate's degree	Assist patient with selection, measurement, and fitting of eyeglasses and contact lenses, follow prescriptions of MD and OD; Able to practice independently, ~50% in MD and OD offices
Optometric Technician or Assistant	~\$27-32k (\$12-15/hr)	HS or GED; On-the-job; Training program	Clinical and administrative; conducting dx tests, education, prep rooms

\*Bureau of Labor Statistics [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

## Dental Support Personnel

	2017 median pay*	Education Training	Notes
Dentist	~\$158k (\$76/hr)	DO	
Dental Hygienist	~\$74k (\$36/hr)	Associate's degree (typically 3-yr program)	Provide cleanings, exam for oral diseases, preventative care/education
Dental Assistant	~\$38k (\$18/hr)	Postsecondary non-degree award (OTJT to Accred. Prog)	Perform many tasks; patient care, x-rays, recordkeeping, scheduling

\*Bureau of Labor Statistics [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

## Dental Support Personnel

- “Generally, dentists often do not personally discuss hygiene, payment options, or routine treatment such as the use of dental floss...Audiologists can learn from the dentists who are surrounded with a competent team providing routine and revenue generating services, thus freeing the dentist to attend to the more critical-care and revenue-generating needs of their patients.” (Freeman, 2014)

## Veterinary Support Personnel

	2017 median pay*	Education Training	Notes
Veterinarian	~\$90k (\$43/hr)	DVM	2.4 techs and 4.7 total staff per DVM (Freeman, 2014)
Vet Tech (technologist or technician)	~\$33k (\$16/hr)	Associate's degree	Perform medical tests under supervision of veterinarian and assist in dx
Vet Assistant; Lab Animal Caretaker	~\$26k (\$13/hr)	HS or GED OTJ Training	Perform routine tasks under veterinarian supervision

\*Bureau of Labor Statistics [www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

## Rhetorical Question

- “If other professions can manage care extenders without reducing overall quality of care, what is so unique about audiology that all patient interactions require services of an audiologist?” (Hamil & Andrews, 2016)

## Audiology Support Personnel

- AAA Audiology Assistant Position Statement (2010)
- ASHA Practice Portal: Audiology Assistants
- Veteran’s Health Administration (VHA) – use of Audiology Health Technicians



## AAA Audiology Assistant Position Statement (2010)

- Task Force (D. Danielson, T. Hamil, B. Dunlop, L. Englemann, A. Grimes, G. Kasewurm, T. Littman, S. Luongo)
  - Audiology is poised to experience expansion in need for services
  - important to future of this profession
  - Can provide valuable support in the delivery of quality services
- “An audiology assistant is a person who, after appropriate training and demonstration of competency, performs delegated duties and responsibilities that are directed and supervised by an audiologist.”
- “The role of the assistant is to support the audiologist in performing routine tasks and duties so that the audiologist is available for the more complex evaluative, diagnostic, management and treatment services that require the education and training of a licensed audiologist.”

## ASHA

- “An audiology assistant is a person who, after appropriate training and demonstration of competency, performs delegated duties and responsibilities that are directed and supervised by an audiologist. When hearing aid dealers are serving in the role of assistant, their duties will always be clarified by the supervising audiologist.”
- “Audiology assistants improve access to patient care by increasing the availability of audiology services, increase productivity by reducing wait time and enhancing patient satisfaction, and reduce costs by performing tasks that do not require the professional skills of a certified and/or licensed audiologist.”

## VHA Health Technicians in Audiology

- VHA Handbook 1170.02 (2011)
  - “Health technicians utilized in audiology practice are individuals with course work or training in basic audiology, otoscopy, amplification, and cerumen management.”
  - “The purpose of the health technicians is to [improve access](#) to patient care by increasing availability of audiology services; [increasing productivity](#) by reducing wait times and enhancing patient satisfaction; and [reducing costs](#) by enabling health technicians to [perform tasks that do not require the professional skills of a licensed audiologist](#).”

## Where Are We Now?

- Variation based on State
  - Regulation
  - Qualifications
  - Duties
  - Implementation/usage

## Numbers Across States (excluding SLPAs)

- Regulation
  - Aud SP (26)
    - Registration/certification (13); License (5)
  - Unregulated ≠ non-utilization!
  - Terminology (for states that regulate)
    - Assistant (17); Aide (11); Technician (2); Paraprofessional (1)
    - States w/ multiple terms: Wyoming (3), NC (2), Montana (2)
- Qualification (minimum)
  - HS/GED (11); Training/Certification Program (7); Associate's (4); Bachelor's (2)

<https://www.audiologyacademy.com/state-requirements>

<https://www.asha.org/Advocacy/state/info/ID/Idaho-Support-Personnel-Requirements/>

## Duties of Audiology Support Personnel

- AAA Audiology Assistant Position Statement (2010)
  - Duties and Responsibilities
    - Supervising Audiologist
      - Delegates duties & responsibilities
      - Maintains legal & ethical responsibility for all activities assistant provides
      - By virtue of their education and training, are the only qualified professionals to supervise and train audiology assistants
  - Varies significantly across states with and without Regulation
    - Regulation typically listing prohibited duties

## Duties - AAA Task Force (2010)

What Duties are Allowed Among State Regulations?	What Duties are Prohibited by Some State Boards?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Air conduction threshold audiometry</li> <li>Otoscopy</li> <li>Hearing aid maintenance</li> <li>Bone conduction threshold audiometry</li> <li>Speech audiometry</li> <li>Immittance testing</li> <li>Assisting in ABR, ENG, OAE</li> <li>Hearing aid orientation</li> <li>Make earmolds/impressions after ears are visually inspected by physician or audiologist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diagnostic services</li> <li>Any procedure that carries risk</li> <li>Development of treatment plan</li> <li>Making referrals</li> <li>Fitting or dispensing hearing aids</li> <li>Function without "direct" supervision</li> <li>Counseling, referrals</li> </ul>

## Duties - VHA Handbook

Example Services Performed by AHT as Directed by Supervising Audiologist	Prohibited Duties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Patient coordination/administrative tasks</li> <li>Hearing Aids/ALDs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performing checks</li> <li>Troubleshooting/minor repairs</li> <li>Cleaning</li> <li>EAA's</li> <li>Instructing Patients in proper use/care</li> <li>Demo alerting and ALDs</li> </ul> </li> <li>Conducting hearing &amp; tympanometry screening (w/o interpretation)</li> <li>Conducting OAE tests (w/o interpretation)</li> <li>Non-diagnostic otoscopy</li> <li>Cerumen management (direct supervision)</li> <li>Ear impressions (direct supervision)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performing diagnostic tests</li> <li>Interpret test results</li> <li>Participate in team/case conferences without presence of audiologist</li> <li>Write, develop, modify treatment plans</li> <li>Assist patients w/o following tx plan or proper supervision</li> <li>Sign formal documents</li> <li>Disclose confidential info to anyone other than supervising Audiologist</li> <li>Select patients for tx or discharge from tx</li> <li>Make referrals</li> <li>Represent themselves as an audiologist</li> </ul>

## Implementation/Usage

- VA Audiology Services
  - Increased Demand
    - 1996 Veterans' Health Care Reform Act
    - 1997 VA expanded eligibility for HA
  - (Dunlop et. al., 2006)
    - 1996-2005
      - 83% increase in Audiologists
      - 720% increase in Audiology Support Personnel
    - ASP provide 18-20% of direct patient care services
- 2004 AAA member survey (n=938) – 28% used support personnel

## Support Personnel in OHIO

- Audiology Aide
  - License
    - Qualifications
  - Duties

## Support Personnel in OHIO

- Audiology Aide
  - (Under-)Utilization
    - Ohio licenses = 1063 Audiologists; 89 Aides
    - Audiologist to Aide ratio ~ 12:1
  - Rationale
    - Limited education/awareness on how to best incorporate
    - Limited scope
    - Tasks do not require licensure

## Audiology Assistants in Ohio (Proposed)

- Purpose
  - Allow practice “at top of profession”
  - Extend care and services
  - Cost efficient
- Timeline

## Ohio AA Draft Proposal (Current)

- Finding Balance
  - Consumer Protection
  - Clinical Utility
  - Affordability and Availability

## Ohio AA Draft Proposal (Current)

- Consumer Protection
  - Supervision
  - Under AuD license
  - Training, education

## Ohio AA Draft Proposal (Current)

- Clinical Utility
  - Determined by supervising audiologist
  - Scope of Practice
    - Prohibited Duties

## Ohio AA Draft Proposal (Current)

- Affordability and Availability
  - Inverse relationship with formal education/training
- Candidate "Pool"



## Envisioning Modern Audiology Practice

- Image of futuristic environment

## Envisioning Modern Audiology Practice

- Smooth Operations
  - Maximizes/extends patient care and services
  - Coordinated workflow
  - Cost effective

## Maximizing and Extending Patient Care

- Kasewurm, 2006
- Michigan Private Practice
- 30 years using support personnel
- In 2006, had 3 FT assistants
  - Staff designated walk-in hours
  - Annual hearing screenings
  - HA warranty checks
- 4780 walk-in visits (2004)
- 3M post HA fit satisfaction survey
  - 84% "satisfied" to "very satisfied"
  - 94% would rx HA to friend/relative

**Table 1.**

*In 2004, 4780 "walk-in" visits were recorded. This table details the chief concern of those patients.*

Patients	4780
Aids in warranty	2517
Minor repair	729
Minor adjustment	630
Clean aid	1578
Dead aid/clean	349
Dead aid/sent out	373
Ear lavage	282
Ear impressions	173
Feedback	97
Modify shell/mold	223
Counsel patient	346

## Coordinated Workflow

### Lifecycle of a Hearing Aid Purchase

- CONSULTATION: 60 or 90 minutes - **Audiologist**
- Ordering/receiving/prep of aid: 45 minutes - **Audiology Assistant**
- Hearing Aid Fitting: 45 minutes - **Audiology Assistant**
- Hearing Aid Fitting: 45 minutes - **Audiologist**
- Tuning During Trial Period: 30 minutes - **Audiologist**
- Final Visit During Trial Period/QSIN/LACE: 45 minutes - **Audiologist/AA**
- 6-month checkup: 30 minutes - **Audiology Assistant**
- 12 month checkup: 30 minutes - **Audiologist** or 15/15 **AuD/AA**
- 2nd - 4th year checkups - **Alternate checkups**
- After 18/24 months if patient indicates change in hearing, screening done by **Audiology Assistant**

Courtesy of Dr. Nichole Kingham & AudiologyAcademy.com

## Coordinated Workflow

- Average Audiologist time saved per week (Audiology Academy)
  - Administrative tasks - 5 hours/week
  - Hearing Instrument related tasks - 15 hours/week
  - Equipment maintenance - 1 hour/week
  - Patient education and training - 9 hours/week
  - TOTAL 30 hours/week

## Cost Effective

- Time IS money
  - Spend it wisely
- Audiologists
  - 30-50% = non-revenue producing activities (Ramos, 2013 as cited in Freeman, 2014)

## Cost Effective

- Example case: The Small Audiology Clinic
- 2 audiologists = \$185,000 total salary
- 6,000 patient visits/year.
- \$31 per patient visit
- 2 audiologists + 1 Assistant = \$215,290 total salary
- assistant to perform hearing aid services (amplification care and use instruction, hearing aid repair)
- 9,000 patient/year.
- cost per patient visit goes from \$31 per visit to \$24
  - ~23% less per visit. (Hamil & Andrews, 2016)

## Cost Effective

- Lifetime value of a hearing aid patient (~20 years)
 

• Repeat purchases (HAs & Services):	\$15,200
• Related products/services:	\$ 2,000
• Referrals:	\$40,000
• TOTAL:	\$57,200
- If more time allowed 3 additional patients fit with HAs/month
  - +\$2,059,200 over 20 years

## Questions/Comments

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