

00129      **Access to Healthcare by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community in Singapore – A Qualitative Study**

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**Aims:** The specific healthcare needs of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community in Singapore has not been researched on previously. This study aimed to identify patterns of and barriers to healthcare access among D/HH individuals at or above 40 years old in Singapore.

**Methodology:** Qualitative data was obtained via focus group discussions until thematic saturation. The data was coded manually and analysed to identify common themes.

**Result:** 7 separate focus groups were conducted with 14 male and 13 female participants aged 39-74 with 26 communicating by signing and 1 through gesturing. Most participants sought primary healthcare at polyclinics and general practitioners. One trend noted was higher uptake of general health screening than cancer screening. Specialist care was generally provided by hospitals. Many participants reported difficulties in accessing emergency services.

Perception of equality in quality of healthcare provided to the D/HH was mixed. Barriers to healthcare access were communication difficulties, systemic reliance on spoken communication and negative prior experiences in seeking healthcare causing emotional distress. Adaptations made were requesting notation of deaf status in health records, writing or bringing translators to improve communication, accompaniment to navigate healthcare environments, changing healthcare providers or avoiding seeking healthcare.

**Conclusion:** D/HH individuals generally reported difficulties in accessing healthcare with adaptations being made on the individual level. Improvement of healthcare access for the D/HH should focus on enabling health information acquisition and facilitating physician communication through training. System level changes include designing deaf-friendly processes and resource clustering to better serve D/HH individuals.