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WHO promotes access to ear and hearing care in communities

04 March 2023 | News

Delivering ear and hearing care through primary health care services



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has released a new primary ear and hearing care training manual to assist countries in building the capacity of their health workforce to provide ear and hearing care at the community level.

The manual is a practical guide on the prevention, identification and management of hearing loss and common ear diseases and can be used to train health workers and doctors who work at community level primary healthcare facilities.

It contains modules on the mechanism of hearing, conducting ear examination and hearing assessment, guidance on prevention, management, and referral of common ear diseases, as well as rehabilitation of hearing loss. It includes hands on practical activities for skill development.

In most places, services for ear and hearing problems remain mainly limited to the tertiary or secondary levels of care, and are provided by highly skilled professionals such as ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialists and audiologists.

Globally, there is shortage of highly trained ear and hearing care professionals which is a big challenge towards providing ear and hearing care for all. The majority of low- and middle-income countries have less than one ENT specialist and one audiologist per million population.

Governments must take steps to integrate ear and hearing care and empower their workforce through training programmes.