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What's New about Getting Older?

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In the Frame of Reframing Aging:

Why and How Should Audiologists Get in the Frame

Ageism can affect all people; it refers to the stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination directed towards others or oneself based on age.

How age and ageing are framed can perpetuate misconceptions and influence the policies we develop and the opportunities we create – or don't (WHO, 2021).

Ageism is Relevant to Hearing Healthcare

It will likely not surprise audiologists that hearing loss stigma and ageism intersect. This intersection was one of the main findings of an Australian research project *To Tell or Not to Tell? The Stigma Experiences of Adults with Hearing Impairment and Their Families* published recently in a 2025 special issue of *The International Society of Audiology* (Ekberg & Hickson, 2025; Ekberg et al., 2025). Combating ageism is crucial for society as a whole, and it is particularly important in the field of hearing healthcare.

As professionals, audiologists can play a crucial role by supporting communication for older

individuals and working with other health professionals and service providers to optimize communication accessibility in healthcare and community setting. Collectively, working with organizations such as the Canadian Academy of Audiology, audiologists can make recommendations to ensure that hearing is considered as programs and policies are designed to address aging. As a prerequisite, audiologists need to be aware of the *Reframing Aging* initiatives happening internationally and nationally. The challenge is to find ways to put hearing health into the *Reframing Aging* frame.

International Reframing Aging Initiatives

In 2012, the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) launched an initiative with eight other organizations focused on aging to create the National Center to Reframe Aging; this center was established in 2022 after 10 years of extensive research and consultation. The formation of the Centre closely followed the release by the World Health Organization of the Global Report on Ageism (WHO, 2021). The purpose of the *Reframing Aging* initiative is to combat ageism in society by advancing and enhancing the way we all talk and think about aging. Many resources have been prepared and made available online, such as the 2022 *Communication Best Practices: Reframing Aging Initiative Guide to Telling a More Complete Story of Aging* (National Centre to Reframe Aging, 2022). Audiologists may be able to learn from and contribute to this global initiative. How could hearing healthcare be fit into the frame of reframing aging initiatives in Canada?

In Canada

The reframing of the aging agenda has become a banner for Canadian strategies in research and government initiatives. Indeed, the 2023-28 Strategic Plan of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute on Aging is called *Reframing Aging: Empowering Older Adults* (CIHR IA, 2023).

Across Canada, numerous initiatives are underway to combat ageism and promote healthy aging and age-friendly communities within health services, academic, and government contexts. Sometimes the reframing terminology has been used directly, but at other times, slightly different yet similar terminologies have been employed in materials advocating for changes in how we think about and discuss aging as we strive to plan better for healthy aging. In the context of health services, the Provincial Geriatrics Leadership Ontario group has published a consensus on *reframing frailty* prepared by the Ontario Collaborative for Aging Well (OCAW, 2022) where it is argued that the term *frailty* needs reframing insofar as its use in geriatric healthcare underscores a negative view of aging. In the academic context, the University of Manitoba Centre on Aging (2025) brands itself positively as *rethinking* and *re-imagine aging*.

Should we re-imagine audiology and develop a consensus on reframing hearing healthcare?

In the context of governments, the following examples are a few of the many reframing aging initiatives from across provinces and territories. The 2025 report of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate British Columbia uses the specific term *reframing ageing*. The 2025 action plan of the Nova Scotia government for the aging uses the word *SHIFT* to describe the need to change the narrative about older adults. In 2025, Office of the Seniors Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador published *An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure* and launched the celebration of *Seniors Month* in June with the *Growing Bolder* social media campaign to focus on

"*the confidence, courage, and continued personal growth that comes with aging — reframing the narrative around what it means to grow older. Aging isn't about fading away — it's about stepping into your strength, your story, and your power*. Do you know about or have you been involved in similar initiatives by your local and provincial or territorial governments?

Canada-wide efforts have also been undertaken. A 2023 report prepared for the federal, provincial and territorial ministries responsible for seniors identified two intersecting themes to target for strategies to address ageism: 1) health and health care, and 2) social inclusion. Many of the main proposed strategies could be relevant to audiologists and/or to the Canadian Academy of Audiology as an organization representing audiologists.

How to Frame Hearing in Reframing Aging

One of the few mentions of hearing health is a section about hearing aid rebates on the Prince Edward Island Government webpage on Healthy Aging (2025). Funding for hearing aids varies across provinces and territories, and much work awaits to improve the affordability of personal amplification. However, even more work needs to be done to promote the use of communication-accessible solutions for older adults that work within the healthcare system and the community. What could individual audiologists and audiology organizations do to reframe audiology?

Practice-related Strategies for Individual Audiologists

Most of the strategies identified in the Canadian ministers report to reframe aging could be addressed by audiologists with a fresh emphasis on AR on hearing accessibility to optimize:

- Offering digital technology training to older adults;
- Implementing strategies to prevent the isolation of older adults (e.g., community outreach, providing information in age-friendly formats, access to public transportation);
- Building intergenerational connections through intergenerational programs;
- Promoting positive depictions of older adults in the media and social media;
- Implementing strategies to encourage the hiring and retention of older workers;
- Implementing senior abuse prevention initiative

Policy-related Strategies for CAA

At the organizational level, the Canadian Academy of Audiology could position hearing and communication accessibility in the policy-related frame of reframing aging initiatives for:

- Reforming to modernize health care systems to better meet the complex health care needs of older adults (e.g., improve training on caring for older adults, implement more multidisciplinary care models, increase length of appointments);
- Implementing campaigns to promote ageism awareness or celebrate aging and the contributions

of older adults;

- Increasing funding for non-profit and community-based organizations, which were recognized as providing many social, educational, intergenerational, and aging support programs that promote the social inclusion of older adults;
- Designing age-friendly communities;
- Developing aging in place supports and innovative housing models as alternatives to long-term care facilities.

Need to Reframe Audiology

Although this is being done to an increasing extent, there is an over-arching need for audiologists and their organizations to reframe hearing healthcare away from an overly narrow emphasis on hearing aids and the negative effects of hearing loss towards a broader and more positive view of hearing health as integral to optimal functioning and healthy aging. One small step in this direction is the recent release of the CAA Fast Facts for Primary Care *Hearing Health and Cognitive Health in Aging Adult Patients: How to Frame the Conversation* (Wilson & Pichora-Fuller, 2025). The upcoming CAA conference will be a great opportunity to discuss future steps we can take to reframe hearing and hearing healthcare so that they align with the framework of reframing aging practices and policies.

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