

PRESS CLIPPING SHEET

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DR AHMED Samah Fareed (2nd R), Tamer el Shahat (left) and Magda Fahmi (right) during a press conference held on hearing problems

Arab hearing loss – more than WHO estimate

A RECENT study has revealed that hearing impairment is a major health problem for Arabs and Egyptians along with diabetes, obesity and hepatitis C.

The study shows that hearing loss has been an underestimated health issue. According to local medical professionals there is a higher percentage of hearing loss than that revealed by the World Health Organisation in its latest global data. The latter estimated hearing loss affected only three per cent of the population in the region.

The new study was carried out by a company specialising in medical electronics. It covered Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia and showed that four per cent, 13,600 people suffer hearing problems.

Results of the survey were announced at a press conference held recently in Cairo and attended by Dr Ahmed Samah Fareed, Secretary General of the Arab Federation of Otorhinolaryngology Societies (FOS), and Tamer el Shahat, representative of the company that did the survey. It was also attended by Magda Fahmi, board chairperson of "Nedaa," a charity association.

Dr Fareed, stressed that lack of awareness is the main factor hindering millions of parents asking for help for hearing problem treatment for their children. He urged the Ministry of Health to apply an

obligatory hearing test for new born children, stressing the importance of the role the media could play in raising the awareness of mothers to hearing disabilities and encouraging them to take their children for early examination, diagnosis and treatment.

According to the survey, 77 per cent of Egyptian medical professionals agree that ignoring the hearing problem leads to a lifetime burden for millions of people suffering from hearing loss in the form of receiving a minimal education. Eighty-six per cent also said that this would lead to long-term financial implications for the state.

The study also revealed the importance of tackling hearing impairment at a young age. It showed that hearing loss mainly affects children at birth, but most paediatric patients are being treated at three years and beyond. This delay in diagnosis and treatment severely harms the development of speech, language and cognitive skills in a child, as well as the child's education and social integration.

"I think one of the most important findings of the survey is that hearing loss appears to be a major disease," Mr el-Shahat said.

He added that the next step should be to intensify efforts to raise public awareness and encourage new-born screening for early detection of hearing loss in Egypt.