



# History of the World Hearing Day

Mario Milkov<sup>1</sup>, Miroslav Stoykov<sup>2</sup>, Silvena Baycheva<sup>3</sup>, Stefan Konsulov<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate professor, Head of Department of Dental materials science and Propaedeutics of prosthetic dental medicine, Faculty of Dental medicine, Medical University – Varna

<sup>2</sup>Assistant professor, Department of Dental materials science and Propaedeutics of prosthetic dental medicine, Faculty of Dental medicine, Medical University – Varna

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Dental medicine, Medical University – Varna

<sup>4</sup>UMHAT Kaspela, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

## Abstract

### Background

According to recent data from the World Health Organization from 2019, approximately 466 million people are living with a disabling hearing loss, most of them in low- and middle-income countries. Undiagnosed and untreated hearing disorders are proven to be a leading cause for morbidity and cost annually \$750 billion. Hearing disorders and hearing loss are believed to higher their prevalence due to the fact that a wide majority of people are exposed to high noises and lack of timely and adequate hearing diagnostics and treatment of ear conditions.

### Methods

Scientific databases – PubMed, SCOPUS and MEDLINE were used to search for the information targeted. The following keywords – World Hearing Day, history, events, prophylaxis, hearing disorders were used. Information from the official websites of the societies involved in celebrating World Hearing Day was included as well.

The aim of the following article is to study the history of the event from its foundation till today, aiming to stress out its usefulness.

### Results and discussion

Back in 1995, World Health Assembly passed a resolution WHA48.9, in which attention of the health impact of hearing loss was put – 120 million people worldwide were living with a disabling hearing difficulties. During the World Health Assembly in 2017, with the adoption of the resolution WHA70.13, hearing care and hearing loss were highlighted as a public health issue. Authors claim that most of the causes for hearing loss are preventable.

World Hearing Day is an international campaign, organized annually by the Office of Prevention of Blindness and Deafness of the World Health Organization (WHO) on March, 3rd. Organizers claim that World Hearing Day is the largest global awareness event, aiming to bring society's attention to ear and hearing disorders. It addresses hearing loss. First activities, connected with the World Hearing Day, took place in 2007, after the Beijing Declaration during the 1st International Conference on Prevention and Rehabilitation of Hearing Loss.

### Conclusions

Legislative measures are need to be undertaken to stress even further the importance of proper hearing. In the era of COVID-19 pandemic and its proven consequences on the hearing and vestibular system, urgent measures for timely diagnostics, treatment and rehabilitation are more than ever needed.

**Key words:** World Hearing Day, history, events, prophylaxis, hearing disorders

## Background

Hearing loss is proven to be one of the most frequent hearing disorders, affecting around 10% of the adult population. It may occur at younger or older age. Percentage of people bearing it increases gradually with age. It impacts speech development in children and causes social disturbances in adults. It could be out of a conductive, sensorineural or mixed mechanism. [1], [2] According to recent data from the World Health Organization from 2019, approximately 466 million people are living with a disabling hearing loss, most of them in low- and middle-income countries. Undiagnosed and untreated hearing disorders are proven to be a leading cause for morbidity and cost annually \$750 billion. Hearing disorders and hearing loss are believed to higher their prevalence due to the fact that a wide majority of people are exposed to high noises and lack of timely and adequate hearing diagnostics and treatment of ear conditions. Proper hearing is of immense importance for individual everyday normal social and work communication, psychological condition, gate stability. [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]

## Methods

Scientific databases – PubMed, SCOPUS and MEDLINE were used to search for the information targeted. The following keywords – World Hearing

Day, history, events, prophylaxis, hearing disorders were used. Information from the official website of the World Health Organization was included as well.

The aim of the following article is to study the history of the event from its foundation till today, aiming to stress out its usefulness.

## Results and discussion

Back in 1995, World Health Assembly passed a resolution WHA48.9, in which attention of the health impact of hearing loss was put – 120 million people worldwide were living with a disabling hearing difficulties. [11] During the World Health Assembly in 2017, with the adoption of the resolution WHA70.13, hearing care and hearing loss were highlighted as a public health issue. [4] Authors claim that most of the causes for hearing loss are preventable.

World Hearing Day is an international campaign, organized annually by the Office of Prevention of Blindness and Deafness of the World Health Organization (WHO) on March, 3<sup>rd</sup>. Organizers claim that World Hearing Day is the largest global awareness event, aiming to bring society’s attention to ear and hearing disorders. It addresses hearing loss. The date March 3<sup>rd</sup> (3.3) has been chosen due to resemblance with the shape of the two ears. [4] Before 2016, World Hearing Day was organized under the name: “International Ear Care Day”. [12] First activities, connected with the World Hearing Day, took place in 2007, after the Beijing Declaration during the 1<sup>st</sup> International Conference on Prevention and Rehabilitation of Hearing Loss. [12], [13] Organizers aim to raise awareness about and promote actions against hearing loss and hearing care. Attention of media, policy-makers, administrators, health professionals and general public is targeted to be drawn. Each year, the team responsible for the organization of the event at World Health Organization, selects a topic on which stress will be put. Educational materials are then developed and are freely distributed in a wide variety of languages. A map with all events organized worldwide is also made.

In Table 1 Slogans under which the events were held during the years 2013-2022 are shown.

**Table 1**

Year	Slogan
2022	“To hear for life, listen with care”
2021	“Hearing Care for All”
2020	„Hearing for Life. Don’t let hearing loss limit you“
2019	“Check your hearing”
2018	“Hear the future... and prepare for it”
2017	“Action for hearing loss: make a sound investment”
2016	“Childhood hearing loss: act now, here is how!”
2015	“Make Listening Safe”
2014	“Ear care can avoid hearing loss”
2013	“Healthy Hearing, Happy Life- Hearing Health care for Ageing People”

World Hearing Day has been celebrated in Medical University – Varna since 2021. Prophylactic and educational campaigns are organized. Patients with a hearing disorder or hearing loss can have a free check-up. On Fig. 1-2 – Official posters of the event in Medical University – Varna in 2021 and 2022 are shown. On Fig. 3-4 moments from the celebrations are depicted. World Hearing Day 2022 was celebrated in Medical University – Varna. Free prophylactic hearing examinations were organized between 14.02 and 07.03.2022 in the Audio-vestibular and sleep laboratory in the University medical and dental center. 50 patients underwent screening for their hearing, among which there were 15 pediatric patients tested.



**Fig. 1.** Official poster of the event in Medical University – Varna in 2021.



Fig. 2. Official poster of the event in Medical University – Varna in 2022.



Fig. 3-4. Moments from the celebration of World Hearing Day in 2021 and 2022 – free prophylactic hearing check-ups for all age groups. Programme for Hearing and Voice Prophylaxis of opera singers from Varna Opera Theatre



Fig. 5. Certificate of Participation of Medical University – Varna in World Hearing Day, 2021

Medical University – Varna received an Official Certificate for Participation in the World Hearing Day 2021. (Fig. 5) [14] It was the first time the hearing day was celebrated in Bulgaria and in the University. 123 patients had their hearing tested. The youngest patient was only 3-month-old, the oldest was 84. Since its foundation in 2020, the Audio-vestibular and sleep laboratory in the University medical and dental center in the Faculty of Dental medicine of Medical University – Varna has been a place where prophylactic campaigns for

examinations of the audio-vestibular system and checking the quality of sleep take place.

## Conclusions

Legislative measures are need to be undertaken to stress even further the importance of proper hearing. In the era of COVID-19 pandemic and its proven consequences on the hearing and vestibular system, urgent measures for timely diagnostics, treatment and rehabilitation are more than ever needed.

## References

1. Isaacson B. Hearing loss. *Med Clin North Am.* 2010 Sep;94(5):973-88. doi: 10.1016/j.mcna.2010.05.003. PMID: 20736107.
2. Lasak JM, Allen P, McVay T, Lewis D. Hearing loss: diagnosis and management. *Prim Care.* 2014 Mar;41(1):19-31. doi: 10.1016/j.pop.2013.10.003. Epub 2013 Nov 18. PMID: 24439878.
3. Чернинкова С, Колев ОИ, Асенов И. Специализирана сетивност. Слухова и равновесна сетивност. В: Неврология под ред. на проф. д-р И. Миланов. Медицина и Физкултура, 2012; 107-114.
4. <https://www.who.int/deafness/world-hearing-day/World-Hearing-Day-Toolkit-for-planning-of-events.pdf>
5. DAVIS, ADRIAN C. The prevalence of hearing impairment and reported hearing disability among adults in Great Britain. *International journal of epidemiology* 18.4 (1989): 911-917.
6. Aimoni C, Crema L, Savini S, Negossi L, Rosignoli M, Sacchetto L, Bianchini C, Ciorba A. Hearing threshold estimation by auditory steady state responses (ASSR) in children. *Acta Otorhinolaryngol Ital.* 2018 Aug;38(4):361-368. doi: 10.14639/0392-100X-1463. PMID: 30197427; PMCID: PMC6146583.
7. Vitkovic J, Le C, Lee SL, Clark RA. The Contribution of Hearing and Hearing Loss to Balance Control. *Audiol Neurootol.* 2016;21(4):195-202. doi: 10.1159/000445100. Epub 2016 Jun 2. PMID: 27251708.
8. M. Milkov, M. Stoykov (2021, August). Importance of otorhinolaryngology and vestibulogy for posture and balance of the human body. In *Varna Medical Forum* (Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 142-148).
9. M. Milkov, M. Stoykov, S. Peev. Modern diagnostic techniques implemented at the audiovestibular laboratory of the University Medical and Dental Center, Faculty of Dental Medicine, Medical University of Varna. *Scripta Scientifica Medica* 53 (2), 2021, 17-20.
10. Maheu M, Behtani L, Nooristani M, Houde MS, Delcenserie A, Leroux T, Champoux F. Vestibular Function Modulates the Benefit of Hearing Aids in People With Hearing Loss During Static Postural Control. *Ear Hear.* 2019 Nov/Dec;40(6):1418-1424. doi: 10.1097/AUD.0000000000000720. PMID: 30998550.
11. [https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA70/A70\\_R13-en.pdf?ua=1](https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA70/A70_R13-en.pdf?ua=1).
12. <https://web.archive.org/web/20140302104735/http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/news/IECD/en>.
13. Chadha, S. (2014). International Ear Care Day – 3rd March. *The Journal of Laryngology & Otology*, 128(3), 221-222. doi:10.1017/S0022215114000413.
14. <https://www.mu-varna.bg/BG/Pages/svetoen-den-na-sluha-mu-varna-2021.aspx>.

**Reviewer of the article:** Dr. Stefan Mirchev, MD, PhD (Bulgaria)