

Geriatric Assessment Tools:Sensory Perception

The Whispered Voice Test is a quick, simple, and accurate test for hearing loss that general practitioners can use in a primary care setting. This test can help identify patients who may need to be referred to a specialist. No special equipment is needed to perform this test; in fact, it compares favorably with using a portable audioscope.

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Source: Macphee GJA, Crowther JA, McAlpine CH. A simple screening test for hearing impairment in elderly patients. Age Ageing. 1988;17(5):347-351.

Performing the Whispered Voice Test:

1. Stand behind the patient's field of vision. This eliminates the possibility of lip-reading.
2. Gently occlude and rub the external auditory canal of the non-tested ear.
3. Ask the patient to repeat a set of 3 different random numbers (e.g., 6,1,9) presented to the tested ear at four decreasing levels of loudness:
 - conversational voice at 6 inches and at 2 feet from the ear, and
 - whispered voice at 6 inches and at 2 feet from the ear. Exhale completely prior to testing with whispered voice.

Scoring:

Passing score is given if the patient can repeat all three numbers correctly at each level of loudness or achieve greater than 50% success over three successive triplet sets.

Failure to pass at each level of voice testing is considered a positive test for hearing impairment.

Failure to hear a whisper at 2 feet indicates hearing loss and may be the most discriminant test of the set.

EAR

EARS
WHISPERED VOICE TEST—
NO EQUIPMENT BUT MUST BE STANDARDIZED

- Explain That You Will Whisper Some Numbers
- Ask Senior To Close Eyes
- 12-18 Inches Apart
- You Exhale And Then Whisper 4 Random Single Numbers At 1 Sec Intervals
- Fail Screen If Senior Cannot Hear at least 2 numbers

Sen/spec-80-100%/82-89%



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