

# **Establishing Collaborative Working Relationships with Pharmacists: Secrets to Success for Audiologists and Hearing Aid Dispensers**

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# Disclosures

Employee of the University of Pittsburgh  
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# Summary

This presentation will review a framework for building collaborative working relationships with pharmacists. Bidirectional referrals, OTC hearing aids, and other opportunities for collaborations will be covered. Examples of existing relationships and secrets for building new relationships with pharmacists will be highlighted.

# Learning Assessment

1. The scope of pharmacy is best described as which of the following?
  - a. Diagnosing and treating disease
  - b. Providing direct patient care and assessments
  - c. Ensuring appropriate, effective, safe, and convenient use of medications
  - d. Prevent, identify, assess, diagnose, and treat impairment of auditory and vestibular function

# Learning Assessment

2. Which of the following is the lowest level of collaboration between pharmacists and other healthcare professionals?
  - a. Professional awareness
  - b. Professional recognition
  - c. Exploration and trial
  - d. Professional relationship expansion

# Learning Assessment

3. A recent study by Midey et al found that which of the following would likely support integration of OTC hearing aids into pharmacy practice?
  - a. Affiliation with research institutions
  - b. Culture or mission of place of employment
  - c. Professional connections to hearing healthcare professionals like audiologists
  - d. Supportive leadership from place of employment

**Pharmacists are  
medication experts.**

***Scope of Practice***

**Provide guidance on appropriate,  
effective, safe, and convenient use of  
medications and OTC products**

# Pharmacists are trained as general practitioners.

## *Core Curriculum*

2-4 years of undergraduate coursework

3-4 years of professional coursework

## *Specializations*

1-2 years of optional, post-graduate residency training



# Pharmacists are educators.

- Medication counseling
- Chronic disease state education
- Vaccine promotion
- Medical device orientation and support

# Pharmacists are also experts of nonprescription products.

OTC medications

Dietary & herbal supplements

CLIA-waived tests for home use

Durable medical equipment

Medical devices

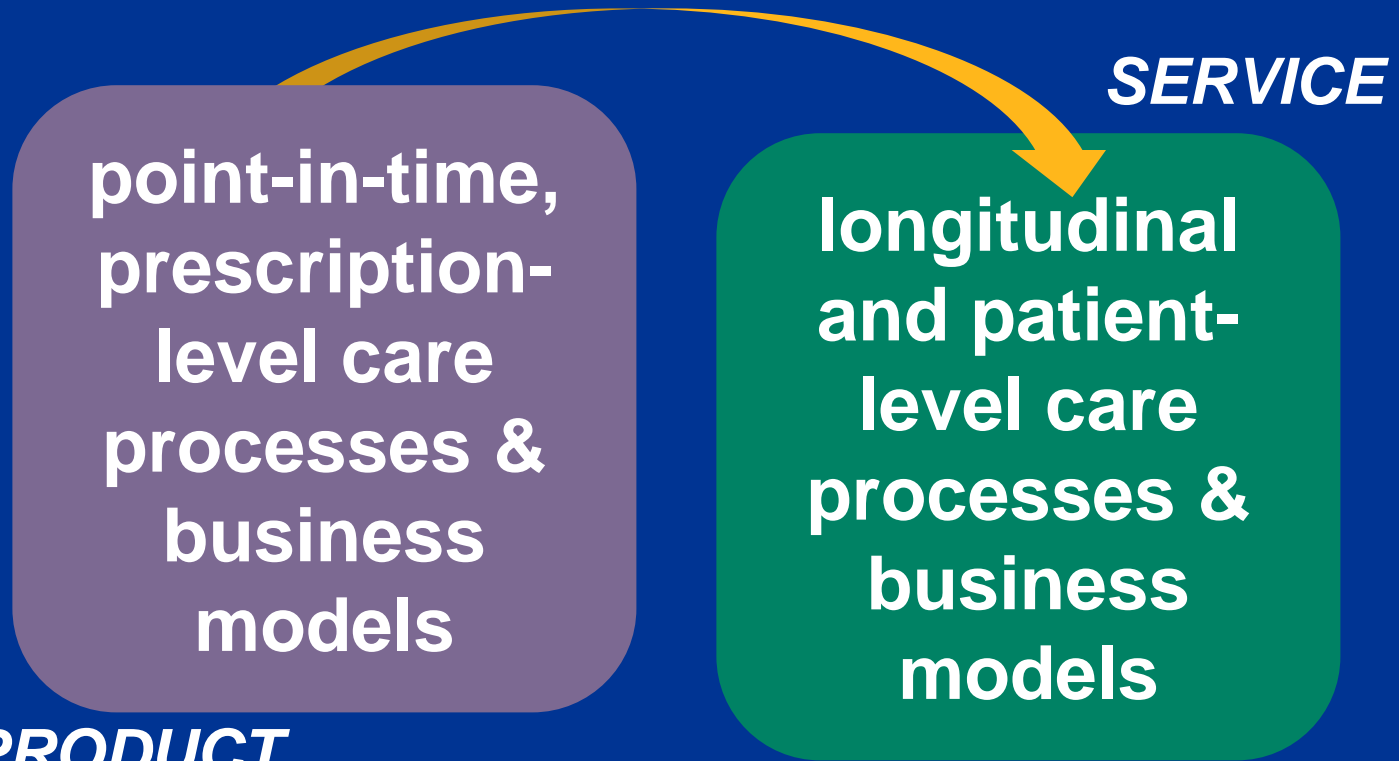




# Community pharmacies are uniquely accessible.

- **62,000** pharmacy locations nationwide
- **90%** Americans live within **5 miles** of a pharmacy
- Medicare enrollees visit the pharmacy **13X/year**
- **~14,000** PharmD graduates every year
- Destinations for **health and wellness**
- Open nights, weekends, and holidays, some **24/7**

# Pharmacy practice is transforming.



# Pharmacy practice is not immune to disruptions.

Mail order

Amazon/  
Mark Cuban

Drone  
Delivery

Pharmacy  
Benefit  
Managers

Automation/  
Robotics

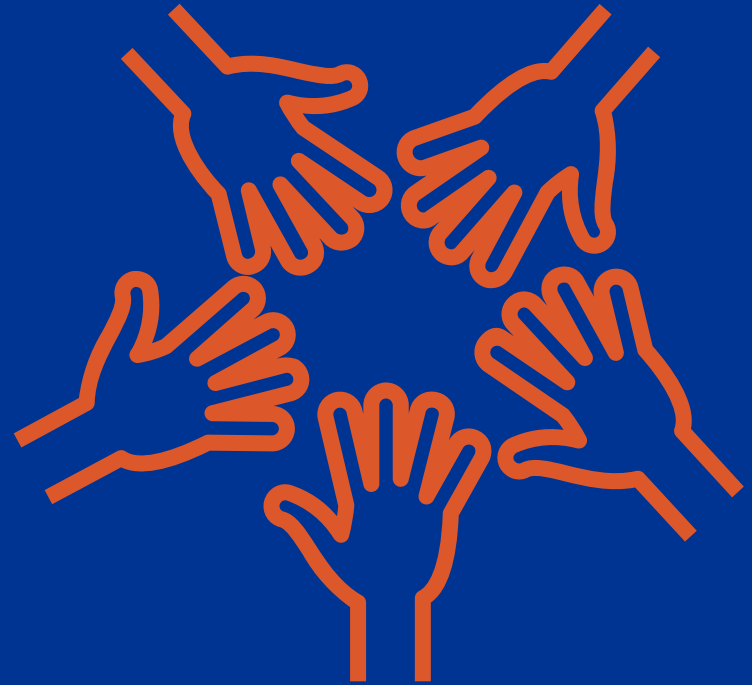
Technician/  
Remote  
Verification

# Pharmacists are the 3rd largest health profession.

**334,200** pharmacy jobs

**14,400** audiology jobs

**37 million** persons with hearing loss



# Pharmacists and audiologists have collaborated in the past.

- Audiologists utilizing patient care rooms in community **pharmacies** to screen for hearing loss, to fit hearing aids, or to service hearing aids
- Audiology and pharmacy services **co-located in retail businesses or mass merchandisers**
- Pharmacies installing **self-check hearing kiosks**; pharmacies selling **hearing aid batteries**
- Student pharmacists and student audiologists working together in **experiential courses at co-located programs of study**



# Pharmacies are co-located with hearing aid dispensaries.



# Pharmacists are next door to hearing professionals.



# Other historical examples...

- In 2008, Beltone began dispensing hearing aids and providing other services in about 30 CVS pharmacies, many of them in the Northeast and Florida.
- In 2015, CVS began piloting audiology services, growing to 49 hearing centers in retail stores. In 2019, CVS no longer saw the need for dedicated space in stores for audiologists to test hearing and fit hearing aids.
- In November 2021, Hartig Drug Company partnered with InnerScope Hearing Technologies to offer free hearing screenings with automated kiosks.
- In 2019, Walmart Health offered primary care provided by physicians, diagnostic testing and lab services, dentistry, vision care, audiology, counseling, and health and wellness education in addition to pharmacy. In August 2023, Walmart Health discontinued Hearing Aid Sales and Hearing Care Services.

# Pharmacists can refer patients to audiologists.

- Exclusions for self-care
- Complex listening needs
- Refined customizations
- Dissatisfaction with OTC hearing aids
- Follow-up support with OTC hearing aids
- Transition to Rx hearing aids



# OTC Hearing Aid Criteria:



1. Age 18 and older
2. Perceived mild to moderate hearing loss



**SCAN ME**

For exclusions to  
self-care and to find  
local audiologists

# Audiologists can refer patients to pharmacists.



- Comprehensive medication review for ototoxic medications
- Purchase of OTC hearing aids
- Purchase of hearing aid batteries
- Self removal of cerumen
- Self treatment of dermatitis

# Secrets for Building New Relationships

**Discoverable**

**Available**

**Informative**

**Collaborative**

**Make it easy for pharmacists to**  
***DISCOVER* you.**

**American  
Academy of  
Audiology**

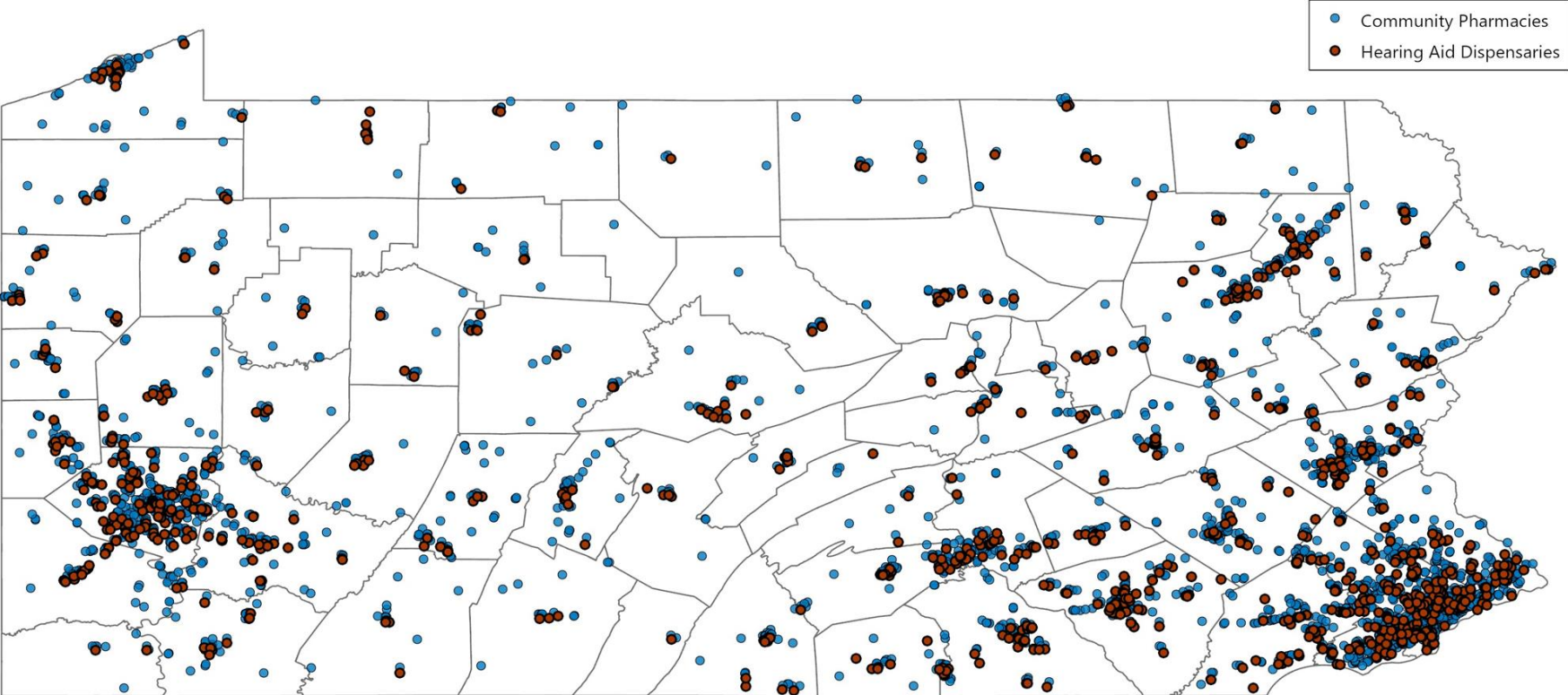


**American  
Speech-Language-  
Hearing Association**





# Pharmacists can help you reach more patients. *AVAILABLE*

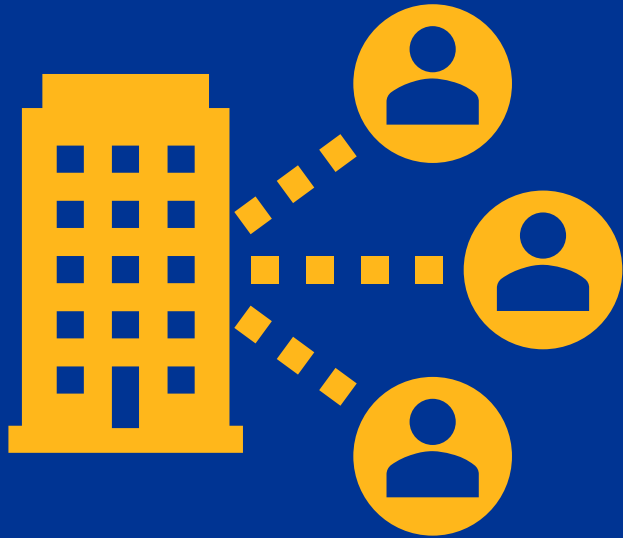


# Pharmacists want your help.

## *INFORMATIVE*

- 79% of pharmacists expect to need 6 months or less for preparation to sell OTC hearing aids
- Supporting factors included:
  - Training and educational resources for pharmacy staff
  - **Connections to hearing professionals such as audiologists**
  - Expertise of pharmacy colleagues

# Pharmacists frequently ***COLLABORATE.***



Commitment to Collaborative Working Relationship

4

Professional Relationship Expansion

3

Exploration & Trial

2

Professional Recognition

1

Professional Awareness

0

# Pharmacists can *COLLABORATE* with you.

- 4 Commitment to Collaborative Working Relationship  
“We’re in this together!”
- 3 Professional Relationship Expansion  
“Let’s do more!”
- 2 Exploration & Trial  
“Let’s try something new.”
- 1 Professional Recognition  
“I appreciate what you do.”
- 0 Professional Awareness  
“I know who you are.”

# Conclusions

- Pharmacists are experts in medications and collaborators in health care
- Pharmacists are willing to collaborate with audiologists and make referrals
- Pharmacies can help broaden the reach of hearing professionals

An aerial photograph of the Pittsburgh city skyline, featuring numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text "Questions? berenbrok@pitt.edu" is centered in white, bold font.

**Questions?**  
**berenbrok@pitt.edu**