

Changing knowledge, attitudes and intended behaviors regarding sound exposure in high school students: A challenging target group

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Weichbold & Zorowka (2007) indicated that hearing education was ineffective at improving hearing protective behaviors in high school students. This raises concerns about exactly how to reach this demographic. This study investigated the changes in knowledge and attitudes about hearing health and noise exposure, and the intended behaviors regarding the use of hearing protection in high school students who were trained and active as educators of elementary school students.

Methods: 19 high school students were recruited to serve as educators in a study of health communication theory-based interventions for NIHL and tinnitus prevention. Students completed baseline questionnaires prior to them obtaining any information about the topic or the project. Participants received training and presented the Dangerous Decibels classroom program then presented it to elementary students as part of the health communications study. At the end of the school year, they were debriefed about their experiences with the project and completed a follow-up program.

Results: All students who participated provided positive reports of their experiences in training and in doing their classroom presentations. As a group, there were significant improvements in every knowledge topic, attitudes, and in intended use of hearing protection at a loud concert in the presence of their peers.

Discussion: These results indicate that high school students can be effectively reached with hearing loss and tinnitus prevention messages, but that it may take more than conventional educational methods. Health communication theory indicates that health promotion efforts should begin early in life and be repeated with different modalities.

Weichbold V, Zorowka P (2007). Can a hearing education campaign for adolescents change their music listening behavior? *Int J Audiol* 46: 128-133.