

## REPORT FROM HEARING ACROSS THE LIFESPAN (HEAL 2024), 6–8 JUNE 2024, CERNOBBIO, LAKE COMO, ITALY

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Following the last conference two years ago, the latest HeAL conference took place on 6–8 June 2024. This biennial conference brings together delegates from around the world, offering an opportunity to share experiences and expand their knowledge. This year's conference focused on contemporary audiology and related hearing sciences. Speakers presented results of centre-based studies, multi-centre clinical trials, and research protocols.

The Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing (IPPH) was represented by Prof. Piotr H. Skarzynski, Natalia Czajka, PhD, Aleksandra Kołodziejak, MSc, Ewelina Bukato, MSc, and Rita Zdanowicz, MSc.

At the opening ceremony, Dr Ferdi Grandori introduced the objectives of the conference, and in the early auditory training session, Dr Natalia Czajka presented two papers on Skarzynski's Stimulator of the Polymodal Sensory Perception. First she outlined ways in which therapy in our centre is conducted and set out what the Stimulator could do. In the second part, she presented the results of in-patient and home therapy. She demonstrated



Natalia Czajka presenting the results of in-patient and home therapy

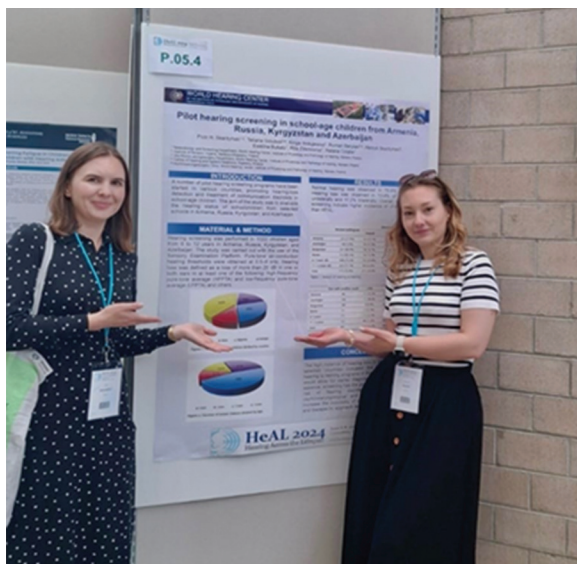


IPPH representatives at the HeAL conference: (from left) Rita Zdanowicz, Aleksandra Kołodziejak, and Ewelina Bukato

the statistically significant effectiveness of both in-patient and remote therapy.

On the second day of the conference, Aleksandra Kolodziejak presented a paper on *Symptoms of auditory processing disorders (APD) in children with tinnitus*, Ewelina Bukato presented one on *Summary of the implementation of the 12 years of hearing screening programs among first and sixth grades attending the primary school*, and Rita Zdanowicz gave a presentation on *Normative values of tests assessing auditory processing disorder (APD) for children aged 6 to 12*. All three received a lot of interest from the audience due to the impressive numbers of patients examined. There were also questions from the audience, who were interested to learn about the working and research methods at our centre.

Dr Sofya Vikhnina presented interesting results in her paper, *Central auditory processing disorders in children with congenital cytomegalovirus infection*, which focused on children with cochlear implants. The results showed that children with congenital CMV and a cochlear implant



Ewelina Bukato and Rita Zdanowicz at the poster session

perform worse than other CI users. The poorer outcomes may be due to CMV involvement in the nervous system as well as central auditory processing disorders.

In the Teleaudiology session, Matthew Bush compared results of clinical tonal audiometry with those of three hearing testing apps: EarTrumpet, Hearing Test & Ear Age Test, and Shoebox. There was a good correlation, both in patients with hearing loss and in those with normal hearing. The next presentation was *Telehealth and simulated patient learning environments: preparing students for the changing face of healthcare*. The main themes of the paper were an overview of Aston University’s telehealth activities including the development of telehealth, examples of innovative telehealth practice, and challenges and the

future in telehealth teaching. Next, Jamiee Rich presented *Healthy Ears: A telehealth-facilitated randomised-controlled trial utilising the “Blow, Breathe, Cough” health promotion programme to resolve otitis media with effusion in children*. The aim was to assess whether implementation of Blow, Breathe, Cough into an innovative telemedicine service model would increase the effectiveness of treatment of OME.

In the final part of the session, Greta Barnabei presented *Ear Portal: Using asynchronous teleaudiology to improve access to ear, nose and throat services for children with otitis media in an urban area*. The aim was to provide an introduction to the Ear Portal telehealth system which is a hospital-based system designed to reduce waiting times for children wanting to see an ENT specialist. The system has been proven to be work well: it is cost-effective and, as expected, has reduced waiting times to see a specialist.

In the poster session, the Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing team presented six papers:

- Organisational aspects and results of the hearing screening programme in first-grade children in the Mazowieckie voivodeship,*
- Hearing screening in school-aged children from Kyrgyzstan: results of screening and observations,*
- Pilot hearing screening in school-aged children from Armenia, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan,*
- Use of portable music players and other noise-related risks among children aged 11–12 years,*
- Aptitude of parental suspicion of hearing loss in children,*
- Prevalence of tinnitus in a sample of 43,064 children in Warsaw.*

All were of great interest due to the impressive size of the study groups and the unexpected results.