## Living with combined vision and hearing loss: what difference does the hearing make?

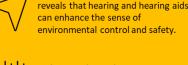
**Background:** People with Usher type 2 have congenital hearing loss and acquired progressive visual impairment which usually appears in adolescence. Previous studies have shown that *information retrieval, communication, orientation, mobility,* and *psychosocial well-being* are affected in people living with combined vision and hearing impairment. However, there is a lack of studies focusing on how deafblind people use and experience their hearing, hearing aids, and other assistive devices.

**Method and materials:** In this qualitative study, eight persons with Usher type 2, with an average age of 57 years participated. The data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The material was analysed according to qualitative content analysis with an inductive approach, addressing information, communication, orientation and mobility, and the psychosocial perspective.

## Results



Technology and assistive devices enable opportunities to acquire *information* through hearing when vision is insufficient.



Addressing orientation and mobility



Hearing aids play a significant role in daily life from a *psychosocial* perspective.

Actively using one's hearing is energy-intensive necessitating breaks and communication strategies to endure a whole day.

**Conclusion:** Hearing and assistive devices are essential for people with Usher Type 2, but the participants' dependence on these technologies introduces vulnerability, where environmental factors and energy-saving strategies are crucial for effective daily living.

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"Nowadays, my hearing aids are the only thing I have. Earlier in my life I used to lipread, and then I had two systems I could rely on. I can't use lipreading any longer, now I only have the hearing aids..."

" My hearing aids have a fundamental significance in everything I do."



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