

Phone
communication
with the many
Aboriginal
people
who have
hearing loss

By Dr Damien Howard and Jody Barney

Phone consultations

- COVID 19 has restricted face to face communication.
- Many Indigenous people only have phones to be able to participate in Tele-meetings
- Many Indigenous people have hearing loss or auditory processing problems that can make phone consultations difficult.
- Dr Damien Howard is a psychologist and Jody Barney is a Deaf Indigenous consultant who have each worked for 30 years in improving communication with hearing impaired Indigenous Australians.

Hearing loss is common
Among Indigenous people.
Up to 70% of people in
remote Indigenous
communities are hearing
impaired due to childhood
ear disease.





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Hearing loss and Auditory Processing problems

- Many Aboriginal people experience chronic and persistent middle ear disease in childhood
- This can leave them with some degree of mild to moderate hearing loss or auditory processing problems
- Telephone conversations are harder for those with hearing loss.
- It is common that people are not aware that they have hearing loss. They have had problems hearing from a young age so it has been normalized.

Signs of hearing loss

- Intently watching the speakers face during face to face conversations
- Being quiet and unresponsive during conversation
- Taking a long time to respond to questions
- Often asking for things to be repeated
- Frequently misunderstanding what was said
- May bring someone to help with communication in face to face conversations



Face watching helps in face to face conversations

Language, Culture and Hearing loss

- People often assume these type of responses are due to only cultural and/or language differences.
- However, hearing loss has often shaped people's limited English and restricted awareness of mainstream ways of doing things.
- Early onset hearing loss makes it harder to learn standard English as well as become familiar with mainstream ways of doing things.
- So when people have limited English and are uncomfortable with engaging with mainstream services they often have a hearing loss and/or auditory processing problems.

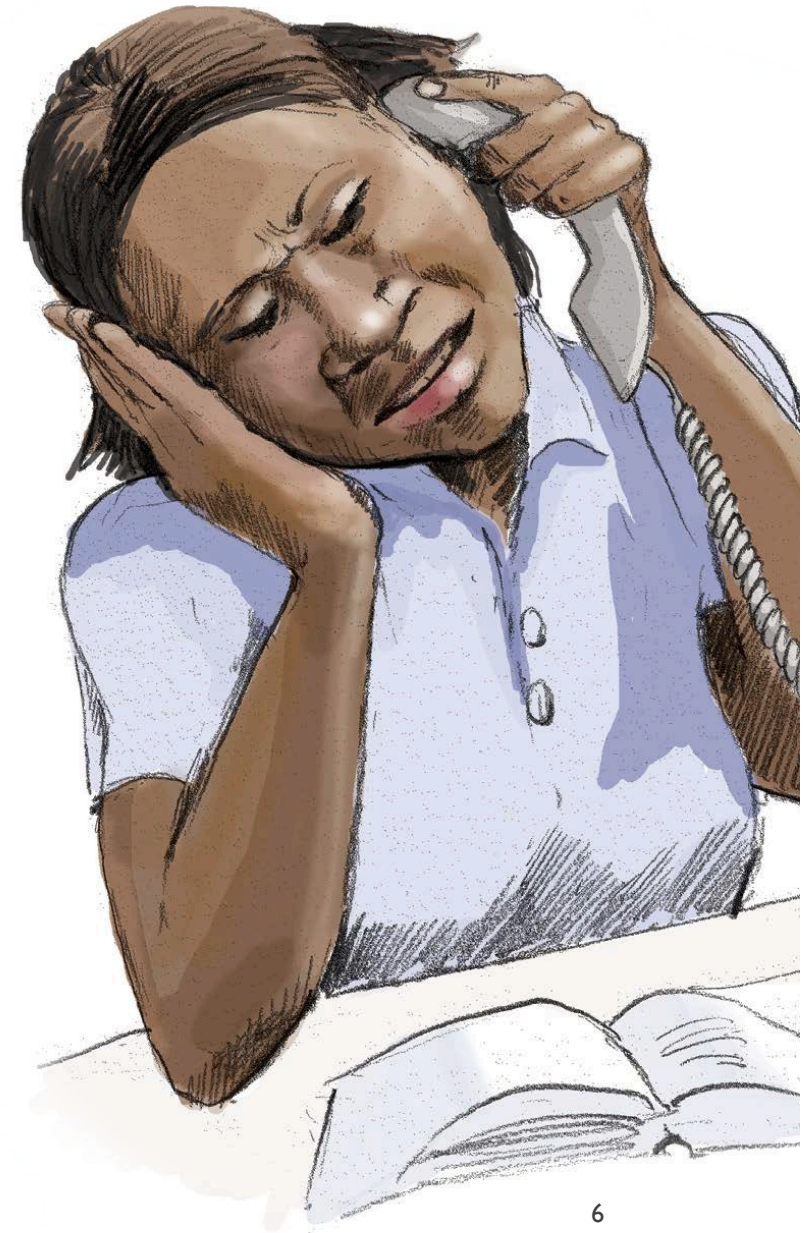


Problems with phone conversations for those with hearing loss

People compensate for hearing loss by face watching and reading body language to supplement what they hear.

Because these cues are absent in phone conversations people may be uncomfortable with them and avoid them.

Or they may engage little and get little out of conversations .



Ways to improve conversation in phone consultations



Ensure there is minimal background noise where you are



If there is background noise around the person you are calling – suggest they move somewhere quieter.



Don't ask 'do you understand'



Do ask 'did I explain that right or should I say it again'



Orientate the patient when you change topic

Use visual prompts

- Visual prompts can help those with listening problems better understand what you are saying.
- Prepare or make illustrations
 - Make your own sketches with key words.
 - Have on hand illustrations that picture common issues you need to discuss.
- During conversation take a photo of illustration and send it to patient as you speak.



Pre-learning

- Knowing what a conversation will be about helps to understand the conversation better when it occurs
- People can prepare people for what will be said and they can prepare what they want to say
- If the person is new to you, sending a photo of your self and a personal message may help encourage the patient to keep the appointment.

Note about what will be talked about
Photographed and texted to person
before phone call

*I want to talk to you
about your payments.*

*They have been stopped
because you have not
talked to us.*

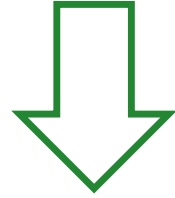
*I want to tell you how
you can get them back*

Post learning

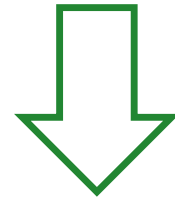
- Post learning enables someone to clarify their understanding of what was said after a conversation.
- It helps to confirm the person has an accurate understanding of what was said.
- In face to face consults there are informal opportunities to clarify informally. But these opportunities are lost with phone and telehealth conversations.
- One strategy to enable post learning is to make a short video summarizing the key points of the conversations..
- This is then sent as a test.
- The person can watch and listen again without shame of asking for repetition.
- They can ask advice from other family members or others.



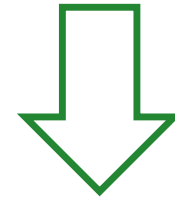
You have to
write application
and send it to me




It may take 3 weeks
before someone gets back to you to
tell you what happened



Someone may call you to ask
more questions



If anything you say in your
application changes you have
to call us to tell us what has changed



EXAMPLE OF
AFTER PHONE
CONVERSATION
NOTE
PHOTOGRAPHED
AND TEXTED TO
PERSON

Follow up clarification calls

- Aboriginal workers have a range of often culturally derived communication skills.
- They can say things in a way that is easiest for patients to understand.
- They are trusted not to judge a person who has difficulties in understanding something.
- In face to face sessions they may be sought out to assist with communication
- One way to do that in phone consultations is to ask the person if they would like a follow up phone call from an Aboriginal worker they know

Would you like a follow up call about our phone conversation . If you do who would you like to call. Joe or Amy

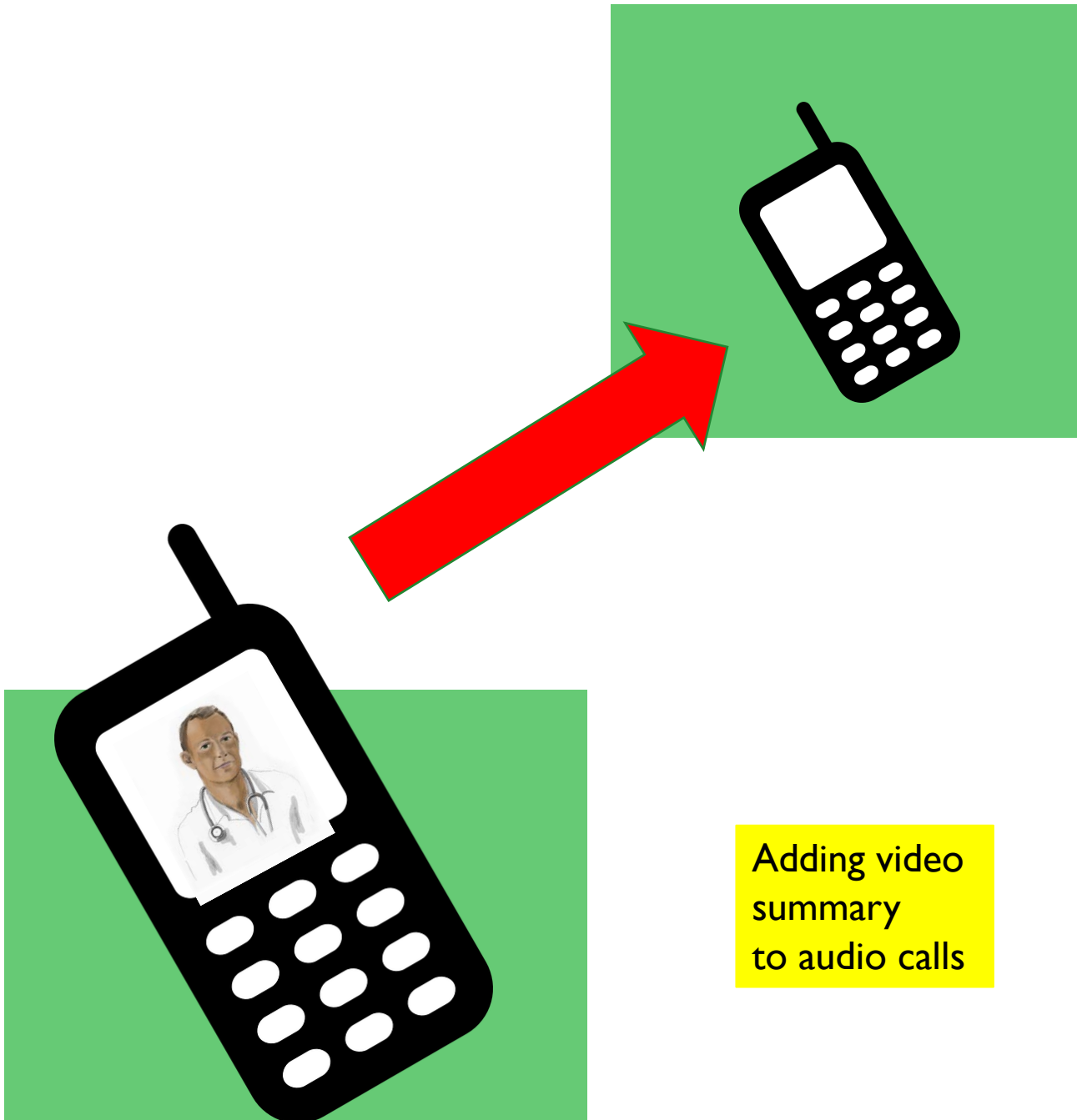
Interpreters
more
important



Without face to face
communication people must rely
more on just auditory input.

People with hearing loss understand best
when spoken to in their most familiar
language

So it is more important than ever to use
interpreters with the many Indigenous people
who have hearing loss and limited English



Adding video summary to audio calls

You can use interpreters in various ways

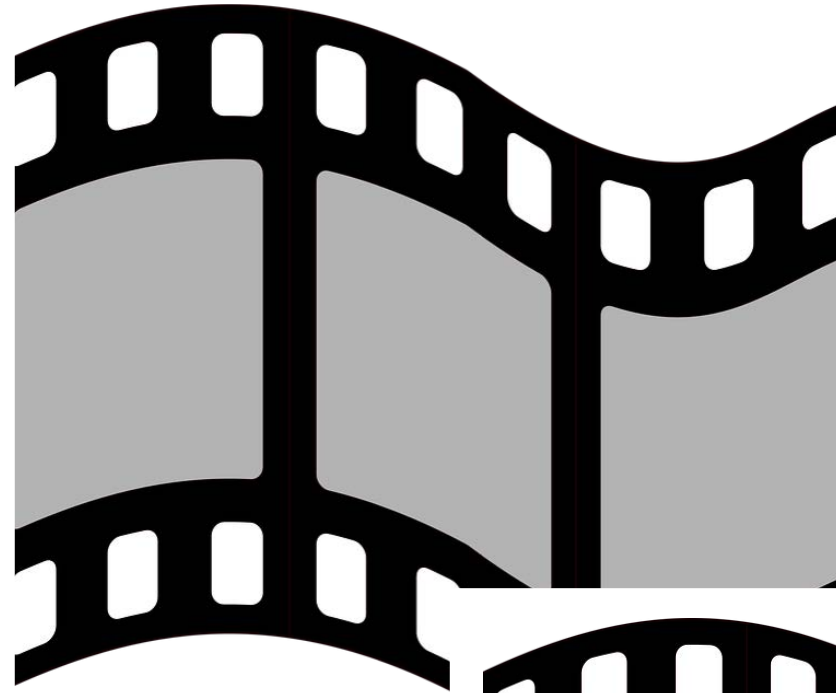
1) during conversation with interpreter on audio call or

2) to create an after call video summary of what was said

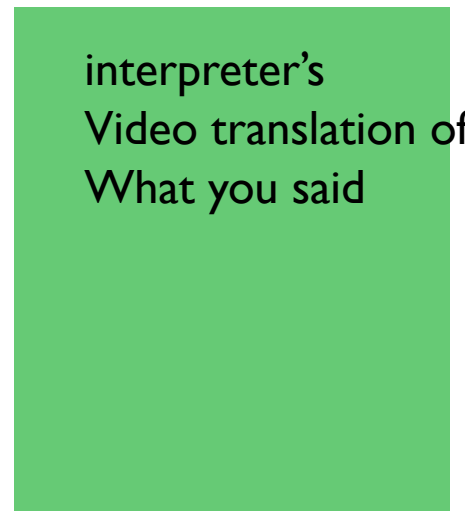
Utell.online is a web app that is designed to easily create bilingual video resources and send them by text

Utell.online – sharing information easily

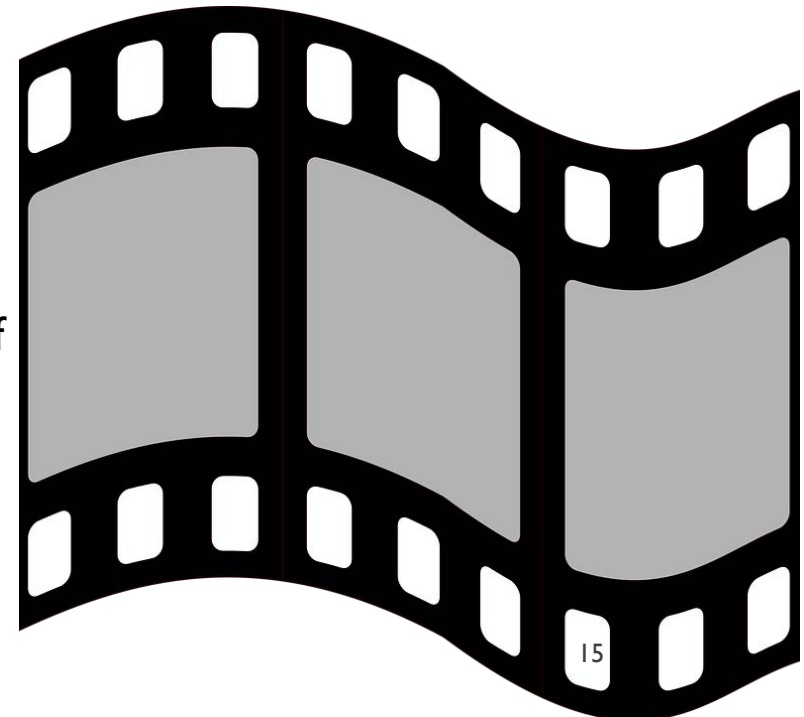
- This is an app that enables you to upload and send two short videos.
 - For example,
 - 1) a video of you summarizing what was said in phone call
 - 2) an interpreter giving a translation of what you said
 - This can be texted as a single URL
 - Go to www.utell.online



You create
short video



interpreter's
Video translation of
What you said



Not only phone conversations

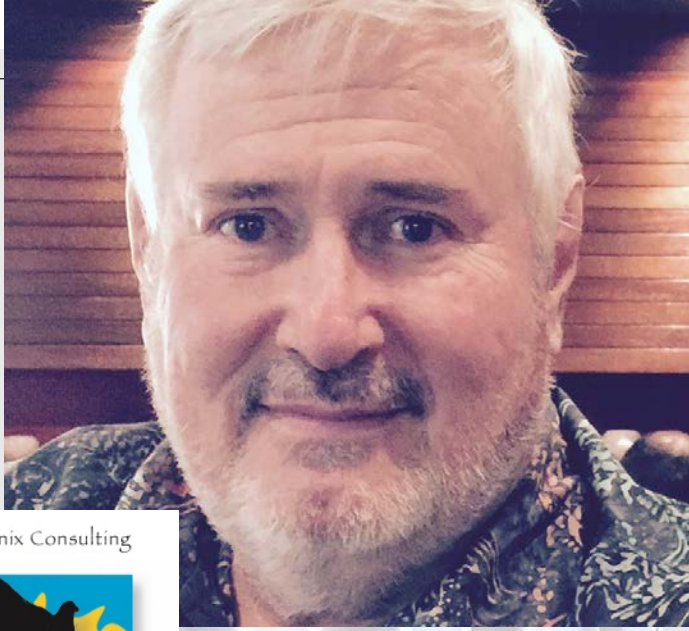
- Wearing a mask
 - prevents face watching to better understand what is said
 - Muffles the voice of the speaker making it harder to hear
 - There are important issues for conversations that happen with a screen between people or
 - At a wider distance than usual
 - Video conference meetings
- Tele Training is available contact Damien@phoenixconsulting.com.au
- online training available soon at www.phoenixtraining.com.au



More information and resources

contact Damien@phoenixconsulting.com.au

- The 2017 AMA Indigenous health report recommended all workers engaged with Aboriginal people undertake 'hearing loss responsive communications training'.
- The changes in communication processes that have occurred as result of the Covid-19 pandemic make this recommendation more urgent.
- Hearing Loss Responsive Communication Training – including the implications of COVID-19 can be found at www.phoenixtraining.online
- Thanks to Dr Simone Liddy GP and Kristy Day Graphic Artist for their contributions to this resource 17



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Phoenix Consulting

