

INTRODUCTION

- Veterans who undergo a hearing aid evaluation by an audiologist may also need to be seen by an ENT provider for medical clearance or cerumen removal prior to being fit with the devices.
- Due to limited ENT capacity at our hospital, medical evaluation appointments for hearing aid clearance are often 4 weeks or longer from the consult date, delaying the hearing aid fitting.
- Many Veterans report difficulty returning for additional visits due to travel distance, transportation availability, and issues with personal mobility.
- In order to better serve our Veteran population, an open-access ENT clinic was designed allowing Veterans to be fit with new hearing aids on the same day as their ENT appointment, saving an additional trip to the hospital.

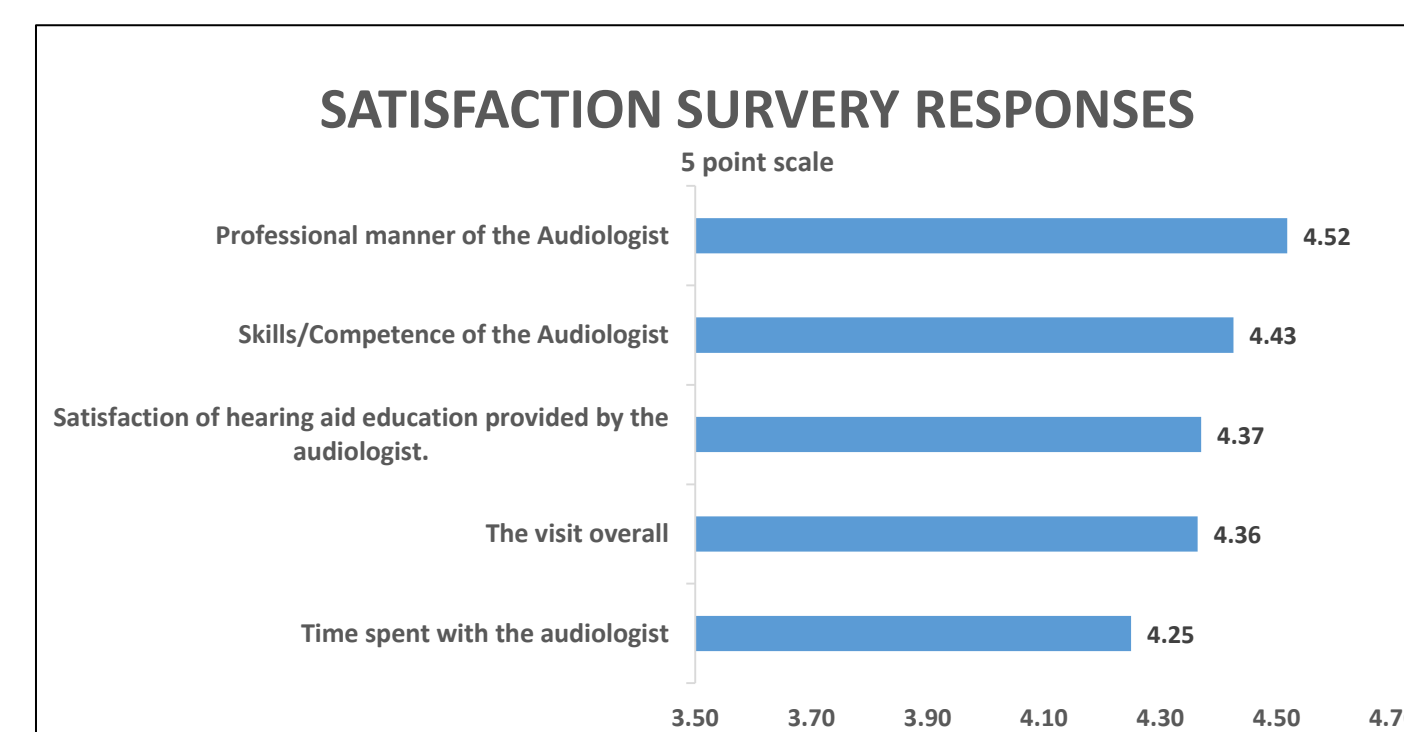
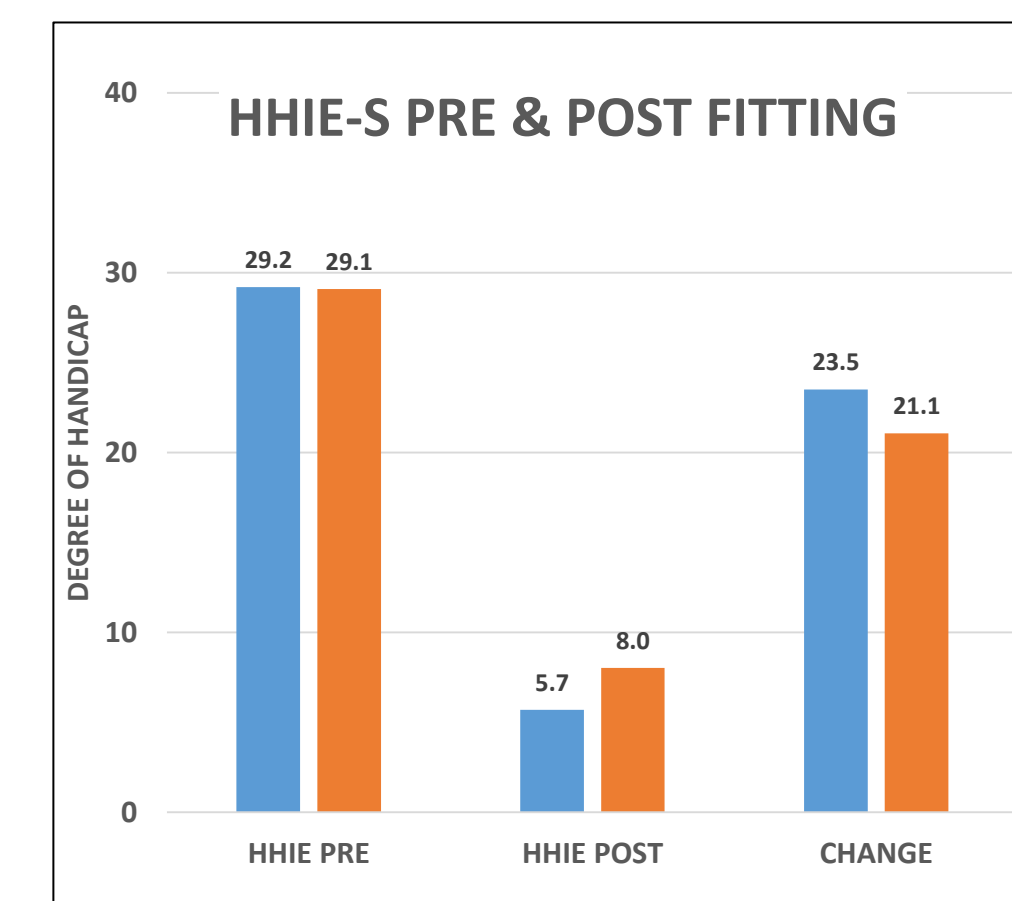
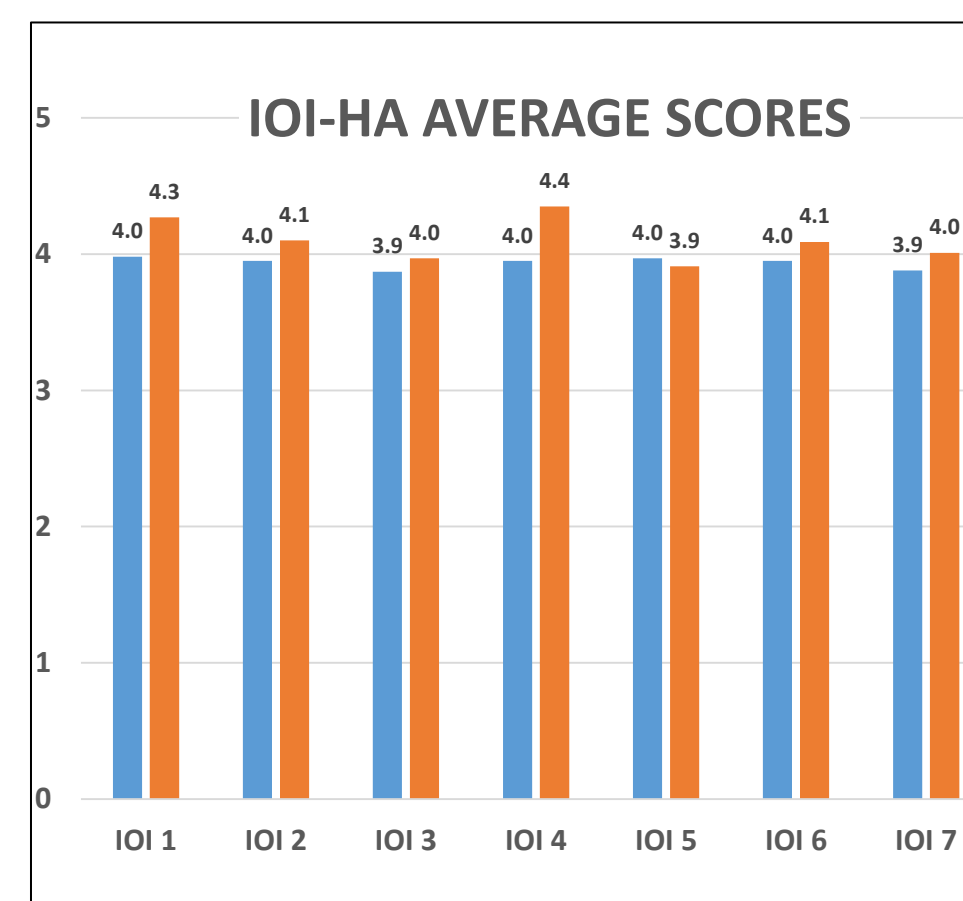
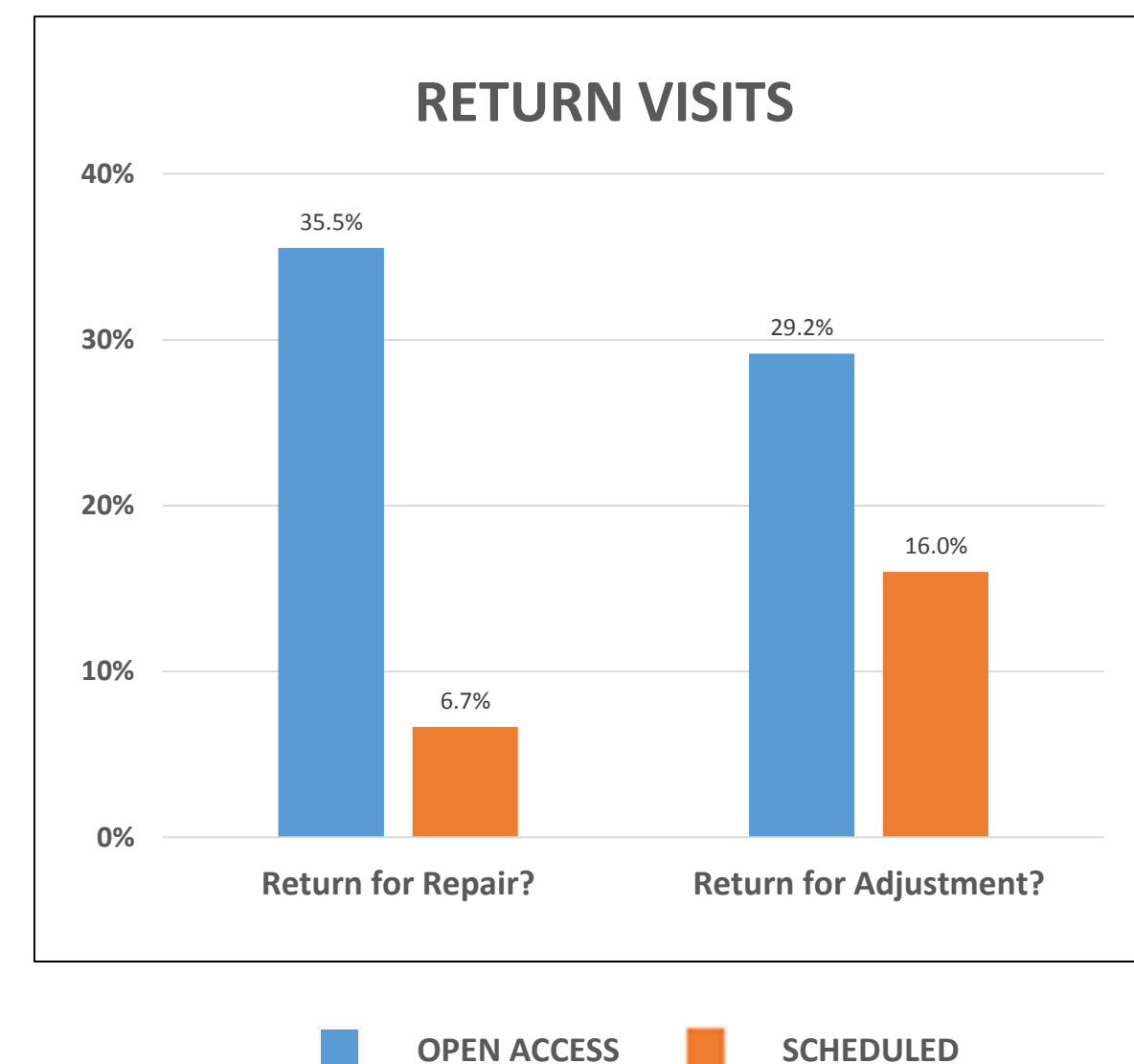
CLINIC DESIGN

- Each day, one staff audiologist is available for 2-6 hours to see unscheduled patients who have same-day ENT appointments.
 - Hours of availability vary by day and are determined by ENT schedule.
- ENT providers send Veterans to the open-access clinic for audiologic evaluations, as well as hearing aid evaluations, problems, and fittings. This quality improvement project specifically evaluates outcomes of hearing aid fittings.

DATA COLLECTION

- A 10 question satisfaction survey was sent to 130 Veterans who had been seen for a hearing aid fitting during the open-access ENT clinic between March 2014 and June 2016.
 - Response rate for the survey was 83%.
- Through chart review, IOI-HA and HHIE outcome measures of these Veterans were evaluated. Additional information regarding demographics, hearing aids, and return visits was also assessed.
- Data from a previous project was used to compare hearing aid fittings during the open-access ENT clinic to scheduled hearing aid fittings.
 - Standard hearing aid fittings are 60 minute scheduled appointments with the audiologist that completed the initial audiological and hearing aid evaluation.

RESULTS



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- Veterans fit with hearing aids during the ENT open-access clinic were significantly more likely to return within the next year (not including a standard 1 month follow-up visit) for repairs and/or adjustments compared to Veterans fit through the standard scheduling process.
- IOI-HA scores 6 weeks post-fitting as well as HHIE scores 4 weeks post-fitting showed no significant difference between outcomes of Veterans fit during the open-access ENT clinic vs. those fit during a scheduled appointment.

DISCUSSION

- Veterans may require fewer return visits after being fit through the traditional scheduling process for several reasons:
 - Having a scheduled hearing aid fitting allows for the Veteran to be fit by the same audiologist who completed the evaluation, maintaining continuity of care. During the ENT open-access clinic the Veteran is fit by the audiologist responsible for covering the ENT clinic that day.
 - Standard fitting appointments are allotted a full hour, providing adequate time for counseling and instruction. On busy open-access clinic days, time for hearing aid fittings may be limited. Having a firm understanding of proper hearing aid care may help prevent future repairs, while adequate counseling time can help establish realistic expectations and prevent need for future adjustments.
 - Veterans may retain more information from counseling during a single clinic visit (Audiology) as opposed to having multiple appointments on the same day (Audiology and ENT).

CONCLUSIONS

- For Veterans requiring ENT evaluation, providing same day hearing aid fittings during an open-access clinic has reduced wait time for hearing aid fitting. Veterans are satisfied with the services received through this clinic.
- An open-access ENT clinic may reduce number of trips to the hospital initially, but Veterans fit through this process may be more likely to need additional visits for repairs and programming adjustments.
- While same-day ENT and hearing aid fitting visits may be appropriate for and preferred by some Veterans, others may be better served by having a scheduled 60 minute hearing aid fitting with the referring audiologist.