



# A Unique Student Experience: Completing Mail-in Repairs at VA Pittsburgh Audiology Clinic

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## INTRODUCTION

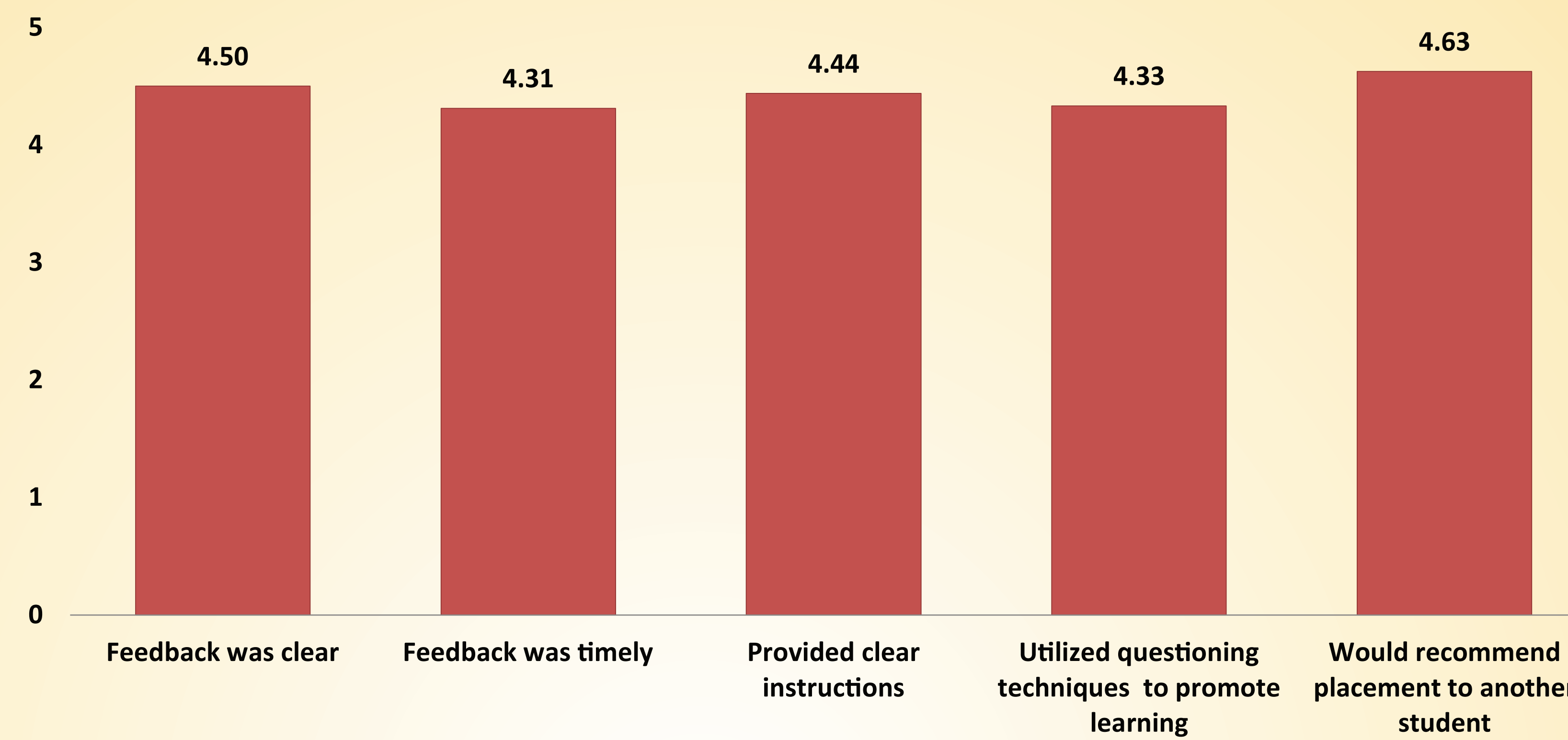
- The Pittsburgh VA Audiology Clinic provides services for Veterans across the tri-state area. Many Veterans mail their hearing aids in for repair due to travel distance and transportation issues.
- Veterans often drop off their hearing aids for service instead of scheduling appointments.
- On average, 355 hearing aids are mailed in or dropped off at our clinic for repair each month.
- A typical hearing aid repair takes 15 minutes to complete, equating to nearly 90 hours of work per month.
- The hearing aid repair clinical placement for Au.D. students was created to provide a new clinical education opportunity and to ensure repairs were completed in a timely manner.

## EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

- The placement is designed for 2nd or 3rd year Au.D. students from the University of Pittsburgh.
- On average, 2 Au.D. students are assigned to the placement each semester, providing 4 days of mail-in repair coverage per week.
- Students attend 2 days per week for 4 hours per day. Even as a half-day placement, students earn an average of 98 clinical hours per semester.
- The first 2 weeks of the placement consist of one-on-one training with a staff audiologist.
- After being trained, students complete the following procedures for each mail-in repair:
  - Assess status of the hearing aid/troubleshoot
    - Attempt to verify patient complaint through listening check and/or physical examination
    - Determine whether the hearing aid is repairable in the clinic
  - Repair the aid
    - Clean and sanitize all hearing aids and earmolds
    - Replace hearing aid parts (tubing, earhooks, receivers, domes, etc.) as needed
    - Run electroacoustical analysis to determine if the hearing aid is meeting electroacoustical specifications
  - Review electronic medical record
    - Determine if the Veteran should schedule an appointment
    - Locate most recent electroacoustical analysis recordings for comparison
    - Evaluate repair history of the device
  - Discuss case with supervisor
    - Present hearing aid, findings, and recommended course of action
  - Finalize repairs
    - Mail hearing aid back to Veteran or send to manufacturer, as appropriate
    - Contact Veteran to provide further instruction when necessary
  - Complete documentation
    - Document all repair actions in Veteran's electronic medical record
    - Complete diagnosis and procedure coding
    - Obtain preceptors electronic signature
  - Verify hearing aids returning from manufacturer repair
    - Upload user settings into all repaired hearing aids and accessories
    - Verify proper function of the devices
    - Mail back to Veteran / Call for pick up once the repair is completed
- Other tasks are assigned when the student has completed all of the repairs or if no mail-in hearing aids were received.
  - Students assist staff audiologists during the daily walk-in repair clinic for hearing aid problems.
  - Students are given the opportunity to work with audiologists to see regularly scheduled patients.

## STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

Evaluation of Placement by Students



- Data from end-of-semester student reviews showed a strong, positive evaluation of the clinical placement.
  - 5= strongly agree, 4- somewhat agree, 3- neutral, 2- somewhat disagree, 1- strongly disagree
  - Data shown is average from 16 student reviews
- All student reviews thus far answered 'yes' to the question 'Was appropriate supervision provided?'

### POSTIVE STUDENT REMARKS

- "Encouraged independent learning"
- "Ability to work at your own pace"
- "Many opportunities to learn from and observe different clinicians"
- "Great experience working with FM Systems and ALDs"
- "Introduced to many manufacturers and models of hearing aids"
- "Allowed students to make mistakes on his/her own"
- "Now feel comfortable repairing any type of hearing aid"
- "Great placement for practicing independence"
- "The experience allowed me to greatly improve my hearing aid troubleshooting skills"

### NEGATIVE STUDENT REMARKS

- "Needs to provide more one-on-one time with the student"
- "It would be nice to have more experience with the manufacturer software"
- "Did not allow for learning of cochlear implant repairs"
- "Some days did not have many repairs"
- "Not enough patient contact to determine the problem with the aid"
- "Instructions and directions were not always clear"
- "Not clear who is the most appropriate person to ask when you need to have your note signed"

## DISCUSSION

Students have reported having both positive and negative experiences during this clinical placement. Individual personality traits/student qualities may explain the differing perceptions.

### STUDENT QUALITIES THAT MAY RESULT IN A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

- Independent
- Confident
- Eager to learn and willing to take on extra work
- Able to work with multiple supervisors
- Seeks help from supervisors when needed
- Excellent multitasking skills

### STUDENT QUALITIES THAT MAY RESULT IN A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE

- Inability to work alone
- Insecure of own ability
- Unmotivated to seek out extra work to keep busy
- Uncomfortable working with multiple supervisors at once
- Difficulty initiating communication with supervisors
- Poor multitasking skills

This clinical placement presents both advantages and challenges for the student.

### ADVANTAGES

- Students gain experience and familiarity with different hearing aid styles, parts, manufacturers, fitting software, and repair techniques
- Allows student to work independently
- Introduces students to the VA setting, the VA electronic medical record system (CPRS) and offers opportunity for future VA clinical placements

### CHALLENGES

- Student required to be self-motivated to stay busy and on task
- Student must be proactive in seeking supervision for all repair work that is completed
- Limited patient interaction
- Little or no practice with diagnostic testing
- Lack of continuity with patients

## CONCLUSION

- The mail-in repair clinical placement at the VA Pittsburgh Audiology Clinic provides a unique clinical experience for 2nd and 3rd year AuD students.
- Students develop strong hearing aid knowledge and repair skills while also fostering independence during this placement.
- Anonymous student evaluations of this placement indicated that students have been very satisfied with the experience.
- The placement provides the opportunity for students to complete the clinical hours requirement for adult amplification. Students may also be able to obtain evaluation and treatment hours in this placement.