

# Ways to support patients with hearing and/or speaking challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic



*“In these challenging times we need to ensure we are communicating clearly and efficiently with our patients, to continue to deliver the best possible care.”*

Professor Richard Gale, Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist and Clinical Director in Ophthalmology; Honorary Visiting Professor, University of York

## Wearing face masks makes communication more difficult for people with hearing or speaking challenges:



Masks take away the ability to read lips and see facial expressions, which help us to better understand what we are hearing



Masks alter the acoustic properties of transmitted speech signals (muffle sound), making it more difficult to understand



Masks can be uncomfortable for people who wear hearing aids or cochlear implants



Even people with normal hearing can experience a 30% decrease in audibility

## Physical distancing likely makes communication more difficult for people with hearing or speaking challenges:



The recommended minimal distance between people is 2 meters\*, which is twice the distance characteristic of many normal conversations



Speech can sound quieter because sound levels decrease with distance



The attenuated speech signal is further reduced, making an already difficult conversation even more challenging

\*Please refer to your local government's guidance on social distancing measures.

### Communication tips:



#### Location

- Use good lighting to ensure faces are lit, which aids eye contact
- Choose a quiet consultation space with minimal noise
- Face the patient directly and ensure clear sight lines



#### People skills

- Make sure you have the attention of the patient
- When talking with new patients, ask if anything additional is needed to facilitate communication



#### Communication skills

- Speak slowly and clearly, and pause regularly
- Use hands and body language to aid communication
- Rephrase questions/input rather than repeating the same words
- Have written information ready to minimize communication errors

The Vision Academy comprises an international group of around 100 global experts. Through their collective expertise, the Vision Academy seeks to provide guidance for best clinical practice in the management of retinal disease, particularly in areas with insufficient conclusive evidence. Vision Academy guidance and educational materials can be accessed freely at [www.visionacademy.org](http://www.visionacademy.org). The Vision Academy is supported by Bayer.

