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## **Infant Hearing Screening during the SARS CoV-2 Pandemic – A descriptive study in a tertiary health care centre in Southern India**

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## Infant Hearing Screening during the SARS CoV-2 Pandemic – A descriptive study in a tertiary health care centre in Southern India

### Introduction:

Hearing is one of the most important entities in the development of an individual and hearing loss is one of the most common congenital defects. Any impairment in hearing can affect one's speech and language development, thereby affecting social, emotional and educational outcomes of the child<sup>1</sup>. The prevalence of bilateral sensorineural hearing loss ( $\geq 50$  dB nHL) ranges from 1.2 per 1,000 healthy newborns and 4-5% in high-risk newborns<sup>2</sup>. Universal newborn hearing screening (UNHS) programmes enable prompt detection of early-onset permanent childhood hearing loss by use of Oto-acoustic Emission (OAE) and Auditory brainstem response (ABR). This helps in timely intervention because the sensitive period of basal maturation of auditory pathway is completed at around 2 years of age. As per the guidelines of Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), newborns should be screened before 1 month, diagnose hearing loss before 3 months and start intervention before 6 months of age<sup>3</sup>. Because of the implications of hearing loss on a child's holistic development, it is prudent to create awareness, provide correct and timely information to the parents in a culturally appropriate way with suitable communication strategies<sup>4</sup>.

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to study the challenges of new born hearing screening during the COVID-19 pandemic in a tertiary care set up.

### Objectives:

1) To study the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on the Neonatal hearing screening program  
**Study design:** A two year hospital based descriptive study conducted in Neonatal Hearing Screening department in Lady Goschen Government hospital , Mangaluru.