The Link between Physical Disorders and Cognitive and Mental Health in Older Adults

We are studying how physical disorders, which can be alleviated or treated, are actually opportunistic targets for improving the cognition, mood, and wellbeing of older adults. This is a collaborative research project between the laboratories of Dr. O’Hara at Stanford, and Drs. Potier and Frachet at Paris Diderot University and the Cochlear Implant Research Center at Rothschild Hospital. Specifically, this collaborative group will examine if cochlear implantation in older adults improves their cognition post-implantation. Since there are currently no treatments for dementia, any procedure that delays cognitive decline in the elderly has substantial public health significance.

Paris Diderot is ideal for this study because the surgery is completely reimbursed by French Social Security, and virtually available to all the hard of hearing. Also, this group has developed an implantation procedure with significantly fewer health risks, making it more viable for older adults. Dr. O’Hara at Stanford is an expert in the examination of cognition in the elderly. Collaboratively, we will measure the cognition, mood, and wellbeing of patients before and after implantation to see if this surgery prevents cognitive decline or dementia. We will also determine if any improvement in cognitive functioning also improves the mood and wellbeing of older patients.