Hearing loss , one of the most frequent problems in the elderly can lead to communication difficulties and psychological and social dysfunction. This cross-sectional study was conducted in order to survey the prevalence of hearing loss and investigate the relationship between hearing loss and various risk factors, as well as quality of life. The sample of 250 elderly subjects aged 60 and over who lived in Watthananakorn District Sakaeo Province between January 15,1996 to May 15,1996 were recruited. The data collection was performed by interview and a hearing test with Impact Audiometer model 1001.

The results showed that the prevalence of hearing loss was 29.6 %. Stepwise Multiple logistic regression analysis revealed that demographic factors of male gender (OR=3.12) aged 80 and over (OR=54.86), age 70 to 79 (OR=6.62) were significant factors of hearing loss. Environmental factors of occupational noise exposure (OR=2.80), more than 10 years of work (OR=11.00) were significant factors of hearing loss.The previous medical history of otitis media and hypertension were significant factors of hearing loss (OR=8.37 and 5.30 respectively). Regarding the impact of hearing loss i.e. quality of life, hearing loss in the speech frequency range group had statistically significant poorer quality of life than the normal group (p-value< 0.0001).

The study suggests that the prevention of hearing loss in the Thai elderly should be started in the high risk group especially, when they are still young. The elderly with hearing loss should receive hearing rehabilitation such as hearing aid usage and psychosocial support from the family and community.