How should we define and measure hearing aid use success? Perspectives of adults who have hearing aids and hearing healthcare professionals.

Sian Calvert1,2, Emma Broome1,2, Ashika Shah3, Jean Straus4, Helen Henshaw1,2

1. NIHR Nottingham Biomedical Research Centre; 2. Hearing Sciences, Mental Health & Clinical Neurosciences, School of Medicine, University of Nottingham; 3. INSPIRE Summer Research Internship Programme (INSRIP), School of Medicine, University of Nottingham; 4. Patient Research Partner

1. Background

Hearing Loss, affecting one in five adults in the UK, can be managed using hearing aids. However, the number of adults using hearing aids is far lower than the number who could benefit from them1.

Previous measures of hearing aid use, for example, the number of hours hearing aids are switched on, may not align with patient perspectives of what ‘successful’ use means. Consequently, clinical trials focused on improving hearing aid use may not be patient-centred. Defining ‘successful’ use is key to ensuring that future research and policy reflects patients’ priorities.

Objectives:
- To define and rank the most important aspects of successful hearing aid use by consensus, from the perspectives of:
  a) Hearing aid users
  b) Hearing healthcare professionals

2. Methods

Two separate 3-stage prioritisation processes were used to reach a consensus on what successful hearing aid use meant to a) hearing aid users and b) hearing healthcare professionals.

Participants were recruited via UK National Health Service (NHS) audiology and ENT clinics, social media, professional networks, and a leaflet distributed at the British Academy of Audiology annual conference in November 2021.

1) Survey 1

a)“Describe what successful hearing aid use means to you” (adults with hearing aids)

b)“Describe what successful hearing aid use looks like for adults who have them” (hearing healthcare professionals)

Responses from survey 1 were collated, summarised, and then carried forward to survey 2 for ranking.

2) Survey 2

Participants were asked to read through all indicative statements and select their 10 most important, in ranked order.

3) Consensus workshop

Top-ranked statements were taken to an online consensus workshop, where Nominal Group Technique2 was used to achieve consensus on the top 5 priority statements to define hearing aid use success.

3. Results: Hearing aid users

Survey responses:

Survey 1:

Q: Describe what successful hearing aid use looks like for adults who have them…

1. Top-ranked statements:
   - Being able to hear conversations
   - Being able to participate in normal everyday life
   - Feeling less isolated
   - Improved patient reported outcomes
   - Hearing speech with clarity

Survey 2:

Q: Describe what successful hearing aid use means to you…

1. Top-ranked statements:
   - Being able to achieve daily life goals
   - Being able to participate in normal everyday life
   - Hearing speech with clarity
   - Hearing if someone speaks on the telephone
   - Hearing other people clearly when they are speaking to me

Consensus workshop: Top 5 statements to define hearing aid use success:

1. Being able to hear conversations
2. Being able to participate in normal everyday life
3. Feeling less isolated
4. Improved patient reported outcomes
5. Hearing speech with clarity

4. Interim results: Hearing healthcare professionals

Survey responses:

Survey 2:

Q: Describe what successful hearing aid use looks like for adults who have them…

1. Top-ranked statements:
   - Being able to join in conversations
   - Being able to hear conversations over background noise
   - Being able to hear and communicate with different groups of people
   - Hearing if someone speaks on the telephone

Survey 2:

Q: Describe what successful hearing aid use means to you…

1. Top-ranked statements:
   - Hearing if someone speaks on the telephone
   - Hearing other people clearly when they are speaking to me
   - Being able to hear conversations
   - Being able to hear as well (or almost as well) as someone who does not
   - Hearing speech with clarity

Consensus workshop: Top 5 statements to define hearing aid use success:

1. Hearing if someone speaks on the telephone
2. Being able to hear conversations
3. Being able to hear as well (or almost as well) as someone who does not
4. Hearing speech with clarity
5. Hearing other people clearly when they are speaking to me

5. Conclusion and next steps

The findings indicate for hearing aid users, successful use of hearing aids was associated with effective listening communication, as well as device factors such as comfort.

For hearing healthcare professionals (provisional results), the top-ranked statements have a wider focus on improved quality of life, maintaining an active social life and reducing isolation, meeting individuals needs, and attaining listening life goals.

Next, we plan to use these results to inform the most appropriate outcome domains and specific measures, that can be used to better assess hearing aid use in future research and clinical trials.

5. References


Sian Calvert sian.calvert@nottingham.ac.uk

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