

Hearables, PSAPs, OTCs, and Hearing aids

What's the difference and why a Hearing Care Professional is necessary

With the evolving technological landscape we are seeing changes to the way hearing healthcare is delivered. Traditionally one would make an appointment with their hearing care professional (HCP) to have their hearing assessed and should they be diagnosed with hearing loss would be fit with a hearing aid by the HCP. Technological innovations have created new ways and products for enhancing hearing care; but not all devices behave in the same manner and not all are appropriate for certain populations.

Hearable	PSAP	OTC	Hearing Aids
<p>Ear worn device with wireless connectivity.¹</p> <p>Not a medical device regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).</p> <p>Not intended for use in the treatment of hearing loss.</p>	<p>PSAP = Personal Sound Amplification Product</p> <p>Ear worn device that is not intended to compensate for impaired hearing, but intended for non-hearing impaired consumers to amplify sounds in certain environments- Not intended to compensate for hearing impairment.²</p> <p>Not regulated devices and are available "over the counter" without need of a HCP.</p>	<p>OTC = Over the counter</p> <p>Hearing aids sold directly to consumers without a prescription from an HCP.</p> <p>Technically does not exist in Canada.</p> <p>In 2017 the OTC Hearing Aid Act mandated the FDA create an OTC category for hearing aids for individuals with a mild to moderate loss which could be acquired without an HCP.³</p> <p>The FDA is to propose a rule by August 2020.³</p>	<p>Ear worn sound amplifying device that is intended to compensate for impaired hearing.²</p> <p>Requires a prescription and be fit by a HCP.</p> <p>Classified, by the FDA, as a medical device.</p> <p>Has been the gold standard for improving audibility for patients with hearing loss.⁶</p>

Patient Satisfaction Facts & Stats

- Individuals who receive traditional hearing aid amplification, counseling, and verification experience greater satisfaction than those who only receive an OTC device.⁴
- 88% of individuals who self-identify with hearing difficulty and own a hearing aid reported they would either probably or definitely still have purchased a hearing aid through a HCP even if the option to purchase an OTC was available.³
- 56% of individuals who self-identify with hearing difficulty but do not own a hearing aid reported they would still likely purchase a hearing aid through a HCP even if OTCs were made available.³
- 69% of hearing aid owners reported a great deal of help from their HCP with the process of selecting, getting used to, and using their hearing aids.³
- 66% of PSAP owners reported they would have benefited from an HCP in selecting, getting used to, and using their devices.³

What You Can Do To Help

PSAPs and OTCs may minimize the financial barrier for some of your patients but it may not be the best solution depending on their hearing loss. HCPs play a vital role in assessing the degree and type of hearing loss as some types may require medical attention or can be managed with surgical intervention. Children diagnosed with hearing loss are required to have a medical assessment before being fit with hearing aids and they are not candidates for over the counter devices.⁵

Non-traditional hearing devices like PSAPs do not meet the needs of individuals with a hearing loss beyond mild and the acoustic performance can vary across the different products on the market.⁶ HCPs can verify whether “over the counter” devices are providing adequate gain for your patient’s hearing loss and they also ensure fitted devices do not exceed safety and or tolerance levels. HCPs can also manage unique challenges of a hearing device such as occlusion and feedback. They spend a great deal of time with hearing aid users training, counseling, and encouraging them to overcome the barriers of hearing aid use. Should any of your patients report hearing difficulties or you suspect a hearing loss, please refer them to a HCP to discuss their options as HCPs play an important role in improving outcomes and satisfaction with hearing devices.^{3,4}

References

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