

Editorial

Income Before Outcome?



As hearing aids and related amplification systems become more diverse and technologically complex, the audiologist must convey to the client an ever-expanding body of information about the broad variety of choices relevant to his or her listening problems before actual selection procedures can take place. In this issue of *JAAA*, authors Gary Jacobson, Craig Newman, David Fabry, and Sharon Sandridge describe a new instrument, the Hearing Aid Selection Profile (HASP), designed to facilitate this very important step in the selection process. The decision to develop a new test instrument was based on the authors' clinical observation that more and more of the time allotted for a hearing aid selection procedure was spent on simply providing information about the myriad available designs and technologies. As a result, there was little time left for assessing other factors critical to an appropriate selection and for counselling and management considerations. They set out, therefore, to develop a measure providing clinicians with a systematic method for making a number of fundamental decisions, during the selection process, based on several key patient characteristics. The total instrument addresses eight separate issues:

1. Motivation to wear hearing aids
2. Expectations about hearing aid performance
3. The importance of physical appearance
4. Attitudes toward cost
5. Attitudes toward technology
6. Manual dexterity

7. Communicative needs
8. Lifestyle and activity levels

The HASP scale was administered to 130 adults undergoing hearing aid selection procedures at three locations: the Cleveland Clinic, the Henry Ford Hospital, and the Mayo Clinic. Analysis of these data revealed a number of interesting effects, not all expected. When participants were divided by age (more than 65 vs less than 65 years), there were significant HASP differences on only three subscales: Attitude toward Technology, Manual Dexterity, and Frequent Listening Situations (all pretty much as expected). Unexpectedly, however (at least to this veteran of the selection wars), was the fact that neither motivation, expectation, appearance, nor cost factors differentiated the two age groups.

When participants were divided by gender, women showed greater motivation to obtain hearing aids (expected), had greater expectations of hearing aid benefit (expected), were slightly more comfortable with higher technology (slightly unexpected), and felt that they had greater communicative needs than men (definitely expected).

This is just a sampling of the wealth of interesting data in this article concerning issues that we all face virtually every working day.

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