

Accessible and Affordable Hearing Health Care

Support innovation in Hearing Health Care: Give Consumers More Options

Why do we need alternatives to the existing hearing aid delivery system?

Hearing Aid Costs and Usage

- While 95% of individuals with hearing loss could be successfully treated with hearing aids, only 22% (6.35 million Americans) currently use them according to the most recent 'MarkeTrak' report.
- Currently 1.28 million Americans of all ages purchase hearing aids each year, with some individuals requiring two devices, bringing the total number of hearing aids purchased across all age groups to approximately 2 million. This number has remained constant over recent years.
- 30% of those with hearing loss cite financial constraints as a core reason they do not use hearing aids, according to a MarkeTrak report.
- The average cost for a hearing aid in 2008 was \$1,675 and almost 2/3 of individuals with hearing loss require two devices, thereby increasing the average out of pocket expense to over \$3,350.
- Hearing aids are not covered under Medicare, or under the vast majority of state mandated benefits. In fact, 71.4% of hearing aid purchases involve no third party payments, which place the entire burden of the hearing aid purchase on the consumer, according to 'MarkeTrak'.
- Cost is the number one call that comes into the HLAA office each day, and the financial help page is the number one page visited on the HLAA website.

Demographics of Hearing Loss

- It is estimated that there are 36 million Americans with hearing loss. Included in this figure are around 9.7 million Americans age 55 and over.
- There are 78 million baby boomers (people born between 1946 and 1964) that make up 29% of the total population
- Beginning January 1st, 2011, every single day more than 10,000 baby boomers reached the age of 65. That is going to keep happening every single day for the next 19 years.
- Two primary objectives of "Healthy People 2020", an HHS-led program to address America's health needs, is to 1) *'increase the proportion of persons with hearing impairments who have ever used a hearing aid or assistive listening device or who have cochlear implants and 2) to increase the proportion of persons who have had a hearing examination in the past 5 years.'*

What is the impact of untreated hearing loss?

- For workers, noise induced hearing loss is the most common occupational disease and the second most self-reported occupational injury.
- Studies estimate a 50-70% reduction of income received for workers with untreated hearing loss as compared to that received by their non-hearing impaired peers.
- For seniors, untreated hearing loss causes additional costs to Medicare and other health programs due to loss of independence, social isolation, depression, safety issues, quality of life and possibly dementia. The Senate Special Committee on Aging, in S. Rpt. 107-74, noted: “As the wave of seniors begins to experience age-related disability, our current long term care system will not be able to support this demographic shift.” Hearing aids help enable seniors to retain their independence and avoid other long-term care costs.
- In 1999, the National Council on the Aging (NCOA) conducted the largest known study on the effects of untreated hearing loss among adults and their families. The study quantified both the negative results of untreated hearing loss and the positive impact of hearing instruments on an individual’s quality of life. It found that hearing loss results in distorted communication, greater isolation, withdrawal, reduced sensory input, depression, anger, and severely reduced overall psychological health. Conversely, hearing aid usage among those with hearing loss was found to significantly impact the following areas:
 - Increased earnings power, of around 50%;
 - Enhanced emotional and mental stability and reduced anger, anxiety, depression and paranoia;
 - Improved health status and less incidence of pain;
 - Reduced social phobias and improved interpersonal relationships.
- 40% of individuals with hearing loss have incomes of less than \$30,000 per year. A Department of Commerce study indicates that the overall family income of people with hearing loss is almost half that of the general population.