

DO NOVICE HEARING AID USERS HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS?

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Introduction

Clinicians often worry that naïve hearing aid patients have unrealistically high expectations about hearing aids. Orientation programs often include a discussion of the possible need to adjust expectations in a downward direction. Generally, the decision about whether a particular patient's expectations are unrealistic is based on anecdotal evidence and the dispenser's judgment.

It would be useful to have a scientific basis for determining the appropriateness of expectations. This poster addresses that issue.

We developed an expectations questionnaire called the ECHO (Expected Consequences of Hearing Aid Ownership).

We reasoned that only experienced hearing aid wearers could provide valid data on "realistic" expectations for hearing aids, so we asked 130 of them the extent to which each of the statements in the ECHO scale is consistent with reality. We called their responses the "reality norms" for the ECHO.

Then we obtained expectations data from new hearing aid users and compared these to the Reality norms.

Overview of ECHO

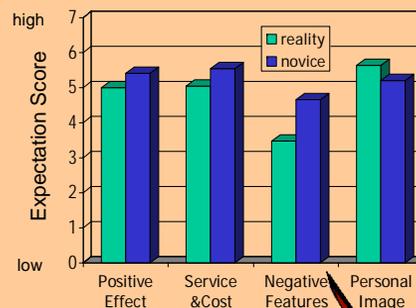
- Items were developed by slightly rewording each item of the SADL (Satisfaction with Amplification in Daily Life; Ear & Hearing, 1999, p306-320).
- Responses are chosen from the same 7 alternatives as for SADL.
- Scoring corresponds to SADL scoring: a global score and 4 subscale scores.

Sample Items from ECHO Scale

- Not At All
- A Little
- Somewhat
- Medium
- Considerably
- Greatly
- Tremendously

1. My hearing aids will help me understand the people I speak with most frequently.
2. I will be frustrated when my hearing aids pick up sounds that keep me from hearing what I want to hear.
3. Getting hearing aids is in my best interests.
4. People will notice my hearing loss more when I wear my hearing aids.

Novice Expectations Compared to Reality Norms



Difference between novice and norm data is significant for every subscale!



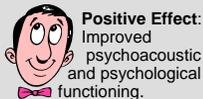
Protocol for Novice Users:

- Seven clinic sites, up to 10 subjects each.
- Patients 60 or older.
- New users (no hearing aid use within the past year).
- Expressed interest in trying amplification.
- ECHO administered before fitting started.



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ECHO Subscales: What do they mean?



Positive Effect:
Improved psychoacoustic and psychological functioning.



Service & Cost:
Dispenser competence and hearing aid value.



Personal Image:
View of self as hearing aid wearer, both internal and externalized.

Negative Features:
Impact of potentially unpleasant aspects.



Conclusions: Typical Novice Hearing Aid Users....

- Have unrealistically high expectations about the advantages of hearing aid use and what the practitioner can provide (Positive Effect and Service & Cost).
- Are rather unaware of the potentially negative aspects of hearing aids, such as feedback and background noise (Negative Features).
- Are more concerned than experienced users about the stigmatizing aspects of hearing aids (Personal Image).

Other Interesting Findings:

- Patients with higher expectations tend to report higher benefit post-fitting.
- Patients with very low expectations about dispenser competence and device value (Service & Cost) are seldom seen as hearing aid candidates.
- Patients who are highly concerned about hearing aid stigma (Personal Image) do not agree to try hearing aids very often.

How can we use information about expectations to improve rehabilitative outcomes?

JAAA, (2000), Cox & Alexander, "Expectations About Hearing Aids ..." in press.