

LEADERSHIP REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2017

Last month the Senate passed a bill making certain types of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids available for individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss. The bill also requires that the FDA develop regulations to ensure that these OTC hearing aids meet the same standards related to safety, labeling and manufacturing protections as all medical devices. The initiative comes out of concerns that the general public considers hearing instruments too expensive and therefore not accessible.

Those considering purchasing OTC hearing aids need to be aware of several important issues:

- OTC hearing instruments are intended to be an inexpensive introduction to hearing help. There are however, significant differences between these amplifiers and more advanced hearing instruments.
- OTC devices simply amplify sounds, including background noise. Digital instruments not only amplify, making speech clearer but also help filter out extraneous and sound – the background noise that makes it so difficult to hear and understand in a crowded restaurant.
- A licensed Audiologist can perform and comprehensive hearing evaluation and an assessment for listening and lifestyle needs. With this information, combined with years of clinical training, an audiologist can program the patient's set of digital devices to personalize their individual hearing needs.
- Included in the instrument program package are follow-up services to address any changes in hearing health, fine tuning and in-office repairs, maintenance education and training.
- People who buy instruments over-the-counter are guessing at their particular hearing needs. There is no professional guidance or expertise associated with the purchase. Those who encounter malfunctioning devices or experience limited benefit have no avenue for support or hearing care.
- Studies show that people who do not hear well in social situations begin to lose connections, avoid socializing entirely, and over time may become withdrawn, depressed and anxious. These people are also 5 times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. So it is critical to get the word out about early hearing healthcare and reduce some of the barriers to this important health concern.

Everyone should have a comprehensive hearing evaluation to understand their abilities and make the most informed decisions about their hearing. Hearing care is health care.

Sincerely,



President & CEO

AWARDED BY OUR PROFESSION

