



Advice Regarding Internet Based Hearing Aid Sales

Audiology Australia is aware that audiologists are being approached to provide fitting and adjustment services for internet-purchased hearing devices. Many audiologists are declining such requests, on the basis that if they provide these services, they will have accepted the arching responsibility to make good on client needs despite the inadequacies of the devices.

Considerations for Purchases Without Clinical Support

It is important to be aware that purchasing hearing aids outside of a clinically-supported process brings substantial risk. This could result in:

- Failure to identify a surgically or medically treatable hearing loss
- Failure to diagnose medical conditions of the ear
- Poor device choice for the individual's physiology, capabilities and hearing
- Deficient correction of the hearing loss
- Noise injury through improper amplification
- Absence of specific device features for individual needs
- Purchase of an inauthentic or inferior device
- No backup or support services over the long-term.

The best way for individuals to be assured of the proper selection and successful fitting of hearing technology to suit their needs is through in-clinic processes, with an audiologist. This will also ensure the critical cooperative long-term support and maintenance for your investment.

The in-clinic provision of devices by Audiology Australia members is consistent with published recommendations of the world's major hearing technology manufacturers. These stipulate that their hearing aids will only be supplied to providers who are able to demonstrate they provide face to face consultations with their clients. As a group, they are generally not prepared to risk the reputation of their brands and products to non-clinical outlets.

In order to provide long-term support, advice and maintenance for their clients, Audiology Australia members have invested substantially in their skills and businesses. Although an internet purchase may initially seem attractive, Audiology Australia recommends that you seek clinical assurance that:

- Medical issues / surgical options are not relevant
- The device features meet your personal needs
- The device is authentic
- The device is covered by warranty
- Clinical and technical support is available during the life of the instrument
- Appropriate adjustment and readjustment is available
- Evidence based, scientific practice will be adhered to in the fitting of instruments

Summary

- Audiology Australia recommends that a collaboration between the client and audiologist delivers the best outcomes for hearing rehabilitation
- Individuals contemplating the purchase of hearing aids without clinical support are strongly advised to consider the various associated risks.

Other links

The major international manufacturers of hearing instruments spend significant resources developing assistive hearing technology. Some of the official positions from major manufacturers on the need for clinical involvement are found below.

www.gnresound.com.au/ContactUs/tabid/77/Default.aspx

www.phonak.com.au/ccau/consumer/obtaining.htm

www.siemens-hearing.com/corporate/guidelines.php

www.starkey.com/find/internet_sales_policy.jsp

<http://www.oticon.com.au/Consumers/The%20Hearing%20Centre/The%20Hearing%20Centre/Consumer%20advisory.aspx>