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New Study: Wearing Hearing Aids Reduces Mortality by 24%

Written by Demetra Valente



As you and I know, far too many people delay the treatment of hearing loss – either due to stigma, concern about aging, or choosing to ignore their challenges altogether.

However, a recent study from Keck Medicine of USC may soon change that. After studying almost 10,000 people with hearing loss challenges – with one group wearing hearing aids regularly and the other group not wearing them at all – researchers found that the group who wore them had an amazing 24 percent lower risk of mortality.

Led by Dr. Janet Choi, an assistant professor in clinical otolaryngology – head and neck surgery at the USC Caruso Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Keck School of Medicine of USC, the research leverages data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (1999-2012).

It focused on nearly 10,000 adults aged 20 and older who underwent hearing tests and completed surveys on their hearing aid usage, tracking their mortality over an average of 10 years post-evaluation.

The study identified 1,863 adults with hearing loss; 237 of them were categorized as regular users of hearing aids (defined as using the aids at least once a week for five hours or half of the time), while 1,483 were never-users. Participants who used the devices less frequently were considered non-regular users.

The findings reveal a consistent nearly 25 percent lower mortality risk for regular hearing aid users compared to never-users, a statistic that holds regardless of hearing loss severity, age, ethnicity, income, education, other demographic factors, and medical history.

Meanwhile, the mortality risk for non-regular users was found to be comparable to that of never-users, suggesting that infrequent hearing aid use does not contribute to a longer life.

It truly frustrates us that many people prioritize a regular eye test, dental checkup, or annual physical but fail to have their hearing tested or seek treatment for their hearing challenges.

With more and more studies linking untreated hearing loss to an array of conditions, health challenges and, in this case, accelerated mortality – please help spread the word and encourage more people to seek treatment and protect their long-term health.

What Will Apple's New "Hearing Aid Mode" Mean for Your Patients and Our Community?

Have you seen the news? Tech giant Apple are looking likely to make their mark on the hearing care industry in the next 6-12 months through the introduction of their new "Hearing Aid Mode" feature.

Set to be released as part of the next iOS update, in September 2024, this new update will be focused on enabling Apple AirPods users to use their earphones as amplifiers to better support them in challenging listening situations, sitting alongside their previously launched "Live Listen" and "Conversation Boost" features.

To accompany this, Apple are rumoured to be releasing their third-generation AirPods Pro in early 2025, which are believed to be the hardware that will allow users to gain optimal benefits from the "Hearing Aid Mode" feature.

What Does This Mean?

It means that the most-owned earphones in Canada will soon have features to help the user to hear better in certain environments and amplify voices/sound by utilizing an in-built app in their smart-phone.

Although over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids have been around in the US since the FDA finalized regulations in August 2022, this is going to be a new and unique challenge in our country, and there remain many question marks around legislation/rulings and how Apple will approach this.

However, with this being an in-built Apple feature more than a purpose-built hearing-related product, I would personally be very surprised if Canada somehow bans/restricts the new Apple AirPods from launching in 2025.

What Impact Will This Make?

With many friends in the US who own independent hearing care clinics, I've heard first hand of the impact that OTC had when it was introduced in 2022.

With mainstream media publishing articles around "affordable hearing aids being available" and heavy advertising campaigns from reputable tech brands, it resulted in many people being confused and further delaying treatment to their hearing loss.

Although Apple will be taking a very different approach, it's likely that there will be similar confusion among local people, who may see headlines or advertising campaigns that share the "Hearing Aid Mode" benefits of these devices.

When this happens, be prepared that you'll have patients asking for your opinion or seeking clarification on what this means. As you and I know, the difference between features on earphones like this and prescription hearing technology is vast. A simple comparison is the difference between off-the-shelf readers and prescription eye glasses.

However, although this may cause some initial confusion, we see it as a major step for hearing healthcare, as one of the world's leading (and coolest) tech brands will be raising awareness for the impact of better hearing and helping further normalize the conversation around hearing loss and hearing loss treatment.

If you have any questions, we're here to help!

Who are Smiles From Ear to Hear?

Our reputation is built on a heartfelt, family-focused approach that nurtures your overall health and wellness. Our compassionate team is devoted to helping you achieve optimal wellbeing through personalized solutions crafted just for you. Your journey with us begins with our signature '360 Wellness Examination'—a thorough, multi-point evaluation ensuring a holistic treatment plan tailored to your needs.



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