

Abstract EFAS/DGA 2007

Assessing the safety and efficiency of direct hearing aid provision by a private hearing aid dispenser: setting the research agenda

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Background: The ageing of the population predicts that the prevalence of hearing impairment and, as a result, the health care costs associated with hearing rehabilitation and patient waits, will continue to increase.

In Europe this has resulted in increasing attention to the safety and efficiency of direct hearing aid provision by private hearing aid dispensers. Our objective was to model the long-term consequences of direct hearing aid provision instead of by referral for a best case scenario and a worst case scenario, and to set the research agenda for the evaluation of direct hearing aid provision by private dispensers.

Methods: A Markov model was constructed with health states regarding hearing aid use, pathology (acoustic neuroma, chronic otitis media, otosclerosis and psychosocial problems), and whether pathology was detected or undetected. The cycle length of the model was one year. Transition probabilities were derived from published literature and from a multi-centre prospective evaluation study. The model outputs were missed pathology, quality of the hearing aid, health-related quality of life, survival, and cost-effectiveness. Probabilistic sensitivity analyses were performed to test parameter uncertainty. Expected value of perfect information analyses were used to support decisions regarding the investment in further research.

Results: The model calculates the cost-effectiveness margins of direct hearing aid provision by private dispensers. It also calculates whether future research is needed and for which parameters future research would be most valuable. Results will be available at the time of the congress.

Conclusions: We will be able to give insight in the safety and efficiency of direct hearing aid provision by private hearing aid dispensers. We can also conclude for which parameters further research is most valuable, and use this information to set the research agenda on direct hearing aid provision.

