

New how-to multimedia videos to increase hearing aid use

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New hearing aid users who struggle to make the most of their device are to be offered help in the form of an educational programme.

The C2Hear programme was developed by researchers and clinicians at the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Nottingham Hearing Biomedical Research Unit (BRU) and experts in the Health E-learning and Media (HELM) team at The University of Nottingham.

The work came in response to concerns that many people who need to wear a hearing aid end up discarding the device after encountering difficulties within the first few weeks.

How-to guides

One of the unique elements of C2Hear is that it was developed in collaboration with more than 30 hearing aid users to ensure the needs of

new hearing aid users were met.

C2Hear – which features a series of interactive multimedia how-to tutorials – are now available for patients thanks to a new commercial partnership between Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust, the University of Nottingham and the audiology product specialist PC Werth and the charity Action on Hearing Loss.

Dr Melanie Ferguson, consultant clinical scientist and the project lead from the NIHR Nottingham Hearing BRU, said: "C2Hear is an excellent example of a collaborative partnership between scientists, clinicians, e-learning experts, the commercial and third sectors, and importantly, hearing aid users, coming together to address a clear patient need.

"We have taken our research beyond the lab into the clinic with the aim of providing benefits to patients as well their families and friends, which has always been my ultimate goal. We are now looking to develop C2Hear for smartphones and tablets."

Better practical skills

Hearing aids have the potential to transform the lives of those with permanent hearing loss, yet out of three million people who have one, around 25 per cent—750,000 people—choose not to wear their device.

The researchers devised a series of 10 short multimedia presentations each around five minutes long which include information, animation, videos and powerful messages from hearing aid users about their own personal experiences.

In a project funded with £234,000 from a NIHR Research for Patient Benefit grant, they tested the effectiveness of C2Hear, available on DVD and online, in a trial involving more than 200 new hearing aid users from

Nottingham Audiology Services.

The results showed that people who used C2Hear were much better informed about potential hearing aid problems and had significantly better practical hearing aid skills.

C2Hear was rated as highly useful and more than 80 per cent agreed the tutorials were enjoyable, improved their confidence and were preferable to written information. More than three-quarters of users (78 per cent) said they would recommend them to others.

C2Hear was officially launched in DVD format at the British Academy of Audiology recently and was one of three finalists in the Software and Telehealth category at the recent EM Academic Healthcare Science Innovation Awards.

Commercial partnership

Professor Heather Wharrad led the development of the multimedia videos in the University School of Health Science's Health E-learning and Media (HELM) team. She said: "The participation of hearing aid users in creative workshops helped us to design a multimedia resource that provides relevant educational information alongside practical tips for new hearing aid users and their families."

The researchers are now launching a pilot project through Nottingham Audiology Services, which will see all first-time hearing aid patients in Rushcliffe receiving a copy of C2Hear as part of their standard clinical management.

The University's Technology Transfer team and the Trust's Department of Research and Innovation has recently licensed C2Hear for commercial development through a partnership with the audiology

devices company PC Werth and charity Action on Hearing Loss.

Dr Roy Harris, Head of Project Development in the Trust's Department of Research and Innovation, said: "This is the first commercially developed product to be licensed by a joint collaborative partnership between UoN and NUH. Listening to what end users needed and their real life experiences has meant that we are able to be at the forefront of new innovation that will have a positive impact on people's lives."

The agreement will see C2Hear available to patients at the point at which hearing aids are provided, potentially – depending on local arrangements – from many NHS audiology departments.

Tom Parker, Managing Director at PC Werth said: "PC Werth is very proud to be associated with C2Hear. Not only do I believe that C2Hear is a great concept, but I also think it has the potential to meaningfully improve the effectiveness hearing aids provided by the NHS, and therefore the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of people in the UK. Better still for PC Werth—as a British Company that is a year older than the NHS itself—working with and supporting research in the NHS gives us the opportunity to put something back into the system."

Tim Roberts of Action on Hearing Loss said: "Action on Hearing Loss is pleased to be supporting this exciting initiative. As the UK's largest charity for people who are deaf, have a [hearing loss](#) or tinnitus this project is important to us to ensure that we create a world where people aren't limited in terms of opportunity and support. It is important that for new [hearing aid](#) users, they feel comfortable with new technology and this DVD allows people to do that by helping them look after their hearing aids where support may not be readily accessible in their local area."

Provided by University of Nottingham

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