Perception and Use of Trainable Hearing Aids by Clinicians and Hearing Aid Users and Candidates

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Aims
Trainable hearing aids, which enable users to fine-tune their own settings in real-life environments, have been commercially available since 2006. Currently, there is no information available about their impact. This study set out to evaluate the uptake and expectations of, and experience with, trainable aids by clinicians and hearing-impaired adults.

Methodology
Two online surveys were developed for the purpose of the study: one for clinicians and one for hearing-impaired adults. Descriptive and non-parametric tests were used for analysis of the data.

Results
Responses from 259 clinicians and 104 hearing aid users and candidates were included. Just over half of the clinicians activated the trainable feature when it was available, whereas one in seven consistently deactivated it. The remaining clinicians had not made a decision on whether to activate the trainable feature, for example because they reported they could not order trainable aids. Most clinicians with trainable aid experience activated training for up to 25% of clients with trainable aids and reported positive outcomes. Almost one in five of the surveyed aid users had experience with training their hearing aids and reported mostly positive outcomes. When the trainable aid concept was explained, over 80% of people with hearing impairment inexperienced with trainable aids indicated that they would like the option of training their hearing aids.

Conclusions
Clinicians and clients had mostly positive experiences using trainable hearing aids. Given the high interest in training among hearing-impaired adults, the provision of trainable devices seems low.