

Improving Accessibility:

Rechargeable Hearing aids for Patients with Significant Sight Loss

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INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 111,000 people in Wales registered with sight loss with roughly 14,900 experiencing issues that significantly impact their day-to-day life (RNIB, 2022). Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board covers a population of approximately 400,000 people (StatsWales, 2022) with around 1,900 people registered as partially sighted or blind (RNIB, 2022)

Maintaining independence and patient safety are key goals that can be impacted by the potentially dangerous management of hearing aid batteries. Rechargeable aids may remove that obstacle, allowing for increased freedom.

OBJECTIVES

- * Discuss the benefits of providing rechargeable hearing aids to individuals with significant visual impairment
- * Assess whether rechargeable aids could also be helpful for individuals with dexterity issues
- * Reveal steps taken to encourage access for others who are registered blind and/or have a significant dexterity issues

METHOD



RESULTS

“She is worried the dog will consume a battery as she keeps dropping them on the floor”

“She has advanced arthritis in hands which makes this very difficult for her”

“She is struggling with handling, changing batteries and using VC, she wants to stay at home remaining independent, for as long as possible”

“I often find batteries on the floor at home where Mum has dropped them”

“The lady let me try the other ones and I couldn’t even pick to batteries up”

“I am able to operate the on and off function but changing the batteries is difficult”

“The patient is still not wearing his aids as he is unable to change the batteries”

Before fitting rechargeable aids feedback focuses on battery safety and handling

15

Rechargeable hearing aids fitted to 8 patients

7 Female

1 Male

All bilateral except one

75 - 91 years of age

Moderate - Profound Hearing Loss

Reason for fitting

■ Reduced dexterity
■ Visual Impairment

After fitting rechargeable aids feedback focuses on ease of use

“ They are easy to recharge”

“I can manage them quite easy”

“They are perfect”

“It is much better to just drop then in than fiddle with the batteries”

“They have made her life much easier

“It is much easier, they have been great”

“It is great because I can just put them to charge”

CONCLUSION

Overall, patient and family feedback suggest positive outcomes with reports that patients found rechargeable hearing aids safer and easier to use independently than their battery-operated counterparts.

For some patients, there were still some handling issues present with the management/ insertion of the mould and also sound quality which can be further adjusted and adapted at follow up.

Rechargeable hearing aids can be a useful alternative for patients with eyesight or dexterity issues, enabling them to maintain their independence and hearing aid use safely.

REFERENCES:

RNIB (2022) Sight Loss data Tool – Statistics on sight loss. Royal National Institute of Blind People

StatsWales (2022) Population of CTMUHB