Factors which influence help seeking, hearing aid uptake, use and satisfaction – what do we know?

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Introduction
The uptake of hearing aids has remained at a low level over several decades despite the high prevalence of hearing impairment and big improvements in device technology. We decided to investigate possible factors that might have an influence on help seeking, hearing aid uptake, use and satisfaction by means of a systematic review of the literature.

Method
The search of the literature was done in a number of steps. The scope of this review was restricted by applying certain criteria.

Inclusion criteria
Adults
- Peer reviewed articles (1980 - 2009)
- Evidence based on empirical data
- Questionnaires were clearly described
- Statistical methods clearly described
- Types of studies (design) no restrictions
- Outcome focused on: Help seeking, hearing aid uptake, hearing aid use or hearing aid satisfaction

Exclusion criteria
Children
- Outcome is “quality of life”
- Outcome is benefit (technological aspects of HA)

Searches for articles were done in computerised databases with journal articles: Embase, Cinahl and Pubmed and reference lists of articles found were checked.

In total: 376 hits
18 met criteria
22 from reference lists
Total number of articles: 40

Stage prior to help seeking and HA uptake: 12 articles
Period covering risk: fitting: 2 articles
Period (long or short) after HA fitting: 18 articles

Is your study included?

Key result summaries

Conclusions
Mixed results for the majority of factors investigated. Only three factors appeared to show consistent effects (or lack of effects) self-reported hearing problems, gender and age.

- Self-reported hearing problems appears to be universally influential in auditory rehabilitation; possibly more important than objective hearing sensitivity.
- Interestingly motivation (by others) seems to have a positive effect on help seeking, but there is no evident association between pre fitting motivation and later hearing aid use.
- The actual fitting process has only been sparsely addressed.
- The factors studied do not explain much of the variation in outcomes found; other factors need to be discovered.
- We know little about what influences help seeking, hearing aid uptake, hearing aid use and hearing aid satisfaction.

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References