

PRESS RELEASE

26 September 2016:

Adult Hearing Loss: Europe's growing challenge

Adult hearing loss is one of the most challenging health and social issues facing Europe today, leading to substantial costs to the individual and to public services. It deprives people of the ability to communicate effectively and affects every facet of their lives.

So why does the impact of hearing loss go unnoticed and unaddressed?

In many countries, with increasing ageing populations and associated health costs, access to hearing technologies may be denied, or the long-term management not provided.

A new European Report, published by The Ear Foundation, called 'Spend to Save', sets out to reveal the real cost of hearing loss and how by increasing access to today's technology across Europe, individual lives can be transformed and money saved.

Sue Archbold, Advisor at The Ear Foundation says: "The opportunities to address the communication and health needs of adults with hearing loss have never been so great. It is hugely satisfying to see how the major advances in hearing aids and implants have revolutionized the impact on adults with hearing loss.

"The evidence is now clear that the cost of NOT providing hearing technologies has been shown to be greater than the cost of providing them."

The report highlights that the cost effectiveness of the latest technologies is now proven, and continues to increase as their prices have fallen significantly and their effectiveness increased. It therefore recommends that funding schemes should include the full cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants, as this would ultimately save money overall for health, social care and welfare systems.

The introduction of National Adult Hearing Screening Programmes would help raise awareness of hearing loss, leading to people taking action earlier rather than later, leading to improved health and wellbeing, as well as cost savings.

The 'Spend to Save' report, which brings together the latest European research and practice in an accessible format, was launched at the Adult Hearing Loss in Europe 2016 Conference at the Kartuizer Center, Brussels on 26 September.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

Copies of Spend to Save can be downloaded from The Ear Foundation website:

<http://www.earfoundation.org.uk/news/articles/553>

- Spend to Save: *Investing in hearing technology improves lives and saves society money - a European strategy* is authored by Brian Lamb OBE, Sue Archbold PhD and Ciaran O'Neill
- The authors would like to thank the European Federation of Hard of Hearing (EFHOH), the European Hearing Instrument Manufacturers Association (EHIMA), the Association of the European Hearing Aid Professionals (AEA) and the European Association of Cochlear Implant Users (EURO-CIU) for assistance with case studies and data contained in the report
- The report and research is supported by an educational grant from Cochlear

Statistics on hearing loss:

- 51 million adults across Europe have hearing loss and this number is growing (*EFHOH 2016*)
- Hearing Loss is the number one cause of Years Lost to Disability in those over 70 in Western Europe (*Davis 2016*)
- Those with severe hearing loss are at five times the risk of developing dementia as those with normal hearing (*Lin 2012*)
- In older age people with hearing loss are at greater risk of social isolation and reduced mental well-being (*Shield 2006*)
- Older people with hearing loss are two and half times more likely to experience depression than those without hearing loss (*Mathews2013*) and are also at increased risk of major depression (*Davis 2011*)
- Social isolation has an effect on health (*Cohen 1995*) and in older people there is a strong correlation between hearing loss and cognitive decline (*Lin 2013*), mental illness and dementia (*Lin 2011*) and premature death (*Friburg 2014, Contrera 2015*)
- Hearing loss is associated with greater use of medical and social services
- Those with hearing loss have higher rates of unemployment and underemployment (*Kochkin 2015*)
- The annual economic costs to European countries has been estimated as:

Germany €30 billion
France €22billion
UK €22 billion
Italy €21 billion
Spain €16 billion
Poland €14 billion
Netherland €6 billion
(*Duthey, 2013*)

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