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Auditory Processing Disorders (APD) in adolescents and adults – challenges, barriers, and (technical) aids

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Auditory processing disorders (APD) are not a "childhood disease", they can persist in adolescence and adulthood. The "Self-perception and environment of adolescents and adults with APD" research project was aimed at studying how APD affects professional and private life, and what challenges those affected are confronted with. People affected were asked which aids they use in everyday life, and how they get access to such devices.

People with APD report a variety of challenges, some of which are comparable to those of people with peripheral hearing impairment. In some cases, difficulties only became apparent after leaving school – for instance, when the listening environment became more challenging, e.g. in university seminars or service consultations. It also became evident that technical devices such as wireless transmission systems and modern hearing aids are highly important for people affected to cope with everyday challenges.

Prescribing or trying out technical aids is often described as difficult because those affected only occasionally have access to APD diagnostics. APD diagnostics for adolescents and adults has only been offered in a few clinics so far, although there are now suitable tests with norm scores or reference values. However, as in APD diagnostics for children, there is no gold standard for the diagnostic procedure. Hearing aid acousticians might play an important part in advising people and acting as a mediator so as to improve the provision of devices to those that need them.