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Do Premium Hearing Aids Offer Better Outcomes Than Basic Models? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

BACKGROUND: Comparing technology levels is important for improving accessibility and affordability of hearing care.

PURPOSE: To evaluate user outcomes associated with premium versus basic hearing aids.

METHODS: A systematic review and meta-analysis were conducted following PRISMA guidelines. Four databases were searched, and studies were selected using the PICOST framework. Outcomes included self-reported, behavioural, and real-ear measures.

RESULTS: Fifteen studies met inclusion criteria, most of which were crossover randomised controlled trials. Meta-analysis of nine studies (n=7,952) showed no significant overall advantage of premium hearing aids for pooled self-reported and behavioural outcomes. Some studies reported modest benefits for premium devices under controlled conditions, while others found no meaningful differences. One study using real-ear measures favoured premium devices. Overall, findings support the non-inferiority of basic hearing aids, with outcomes varying by listening context and individual needs.

CONCLUSION: Results highlight the importance of initial judgment in technology selection, the need for standardized reporting of HA technology levels and further research on advanced features in daily listening.