

Refining the candidacy criteria for cochlear implants: aspects beyond established audiometric criteria

Based on 40 years of experience with cochlear implants (CIs), the indication criteria have expanded from pure deafness to include severe hearing loss. CIs thus represent an alternative to (high-power) hearing aids for many affected individuals. Increased cooperation between ENT clinics, hearing aid specialists, and CI manufacturers is bringing hearing aid users with limited benefit into focus for potential CI treatment. Audiometry-based criteria now exist that can predict a likely better hearing outcome with a CI compared to hearing aids. However, these criteria consider only speech and pure-tone audiometric data, not subjective functional limitations or perceived disability. Therefore, a comprehensive questionnaire study compared hearing aid users who meet these criteria with a comparable group just below the threshold values. Are there differences in demographics, hearing-related quality of life, auditory comprehension, functional limitations, and the effectiveness of current hearing aids? What consequences can be derived from this for the further development of selection criteria for cochlear implant provision?