



Third Party Tools and the Importance of Patient-Centered Care

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Patient-centered hearing care is a family event. It involves both patient and third parties in the decision making process of hearing aid selection. The IOM (Institute of Medicine) defines patient-centered care as: "Providing care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs and values and ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions." Clearly it is in the best interest of the patient's outcome to be actively involved in the fitting process, as well as their children, spouses and friends.

Patients want guidance from their hearing care providers, but they expect that guidance to be provided in the context of full, unbiased information about options, benefits and risks. This is where a third party can have the most positive impact, "Patient-centered" means considering patients' cultural traditions, personal preferences and values, family situations, social circumstances, physical limitations and lifestyles.

In addition to performing a clinical analysis of the scope and breadth of a patient's hearing loss through the normal test protocols of Audiometry, Tympanometry and otoscopic evaluation, it is critically important to secure third party involvement in the understanding of the hearing loss. Consensus is necessary in achieving commitment from the patient to accept amplification as treatment.

Today, there are advanced computer-based technologies that incorporate "on-board" tools that are designed *specifically* for the third party. Gaining commitment from the patient for hearing instruments is the primary goal during the initial stages of examination and diagnosis. MedRx recognizes that these tools allow their advanced diagnostic technologies (audiometry, REAL EAR) to bridge the gap between analysis and amplification acquisition.

The Hearing Loss Simulator (HLS) demonstrates the effect of the client's hearing loss for the spouse or family member. The program attenuates an input signal to simulate the severity of the loss for the third party. The spouse or family member listens to the free field speakers with and then without the simulated hearing loss. The practitioner can toggle between "normal" and "hearing impaired" simulations for a powerful and dramatic demonstration to the third party. The third party member can also hear how their own voice is distorted by the hearing loss when the "Record Input" option is used. This provides a real-world experience for the third party. This reinforcement is effective in encouraging the patient to purchase hearing instruments. The Hearing Loss Simulator requires the client's Audiogram data.

In addition, MedRx offers a Hearing Aid Simulator (HAS) as an alternative to using a stock hearing aid to demonstrate the benefits of amplification to an inexperienced user. The system applies the fitting rules by default to the patient's audiogram and simulates how a hearing aid can help. The patient is instructed to listen to this signal through the headphones. Options for editing the gain applied to the audiogram are provided in the software.

Using these tools, can empower the patient and the third party to make informed and logical decisions about their healthcare.

Terry Ross is Vice President of MedRx, Inc., a leading global manufacturer of PC-based diagnostic and testing instrumentation. He has over 35 years of executive management experience in the hearing care industry. He is responsible for directing the global sales and distribution activities for MedRx.