

## Benefit of hearing rehabilitation in adults with intellectual disabilities

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**Background:** Many adults with intellectual disabilities suffer from hearing loss.

**Research Question:** The aim of our study was to assess the experienced benefit of hearing aid fitting in adults with moderate intellectual disabilities and hearing impairment. Do hearing aids contribute to better communication and better functioning of these adults, according to their proxies?

**Method:** After diagnosis of hearing loss and permission to treat, hearing aids were fitted. Two subgroups of subjects were distinguished: those referred by caregivers to have a suspected hearing problem and those identified during a screening program carried out by audiologists. Benefit was assessed based on amount of device use, observable changes in behavior and improvements in quality of life.

**Results:** Out of 282 screened persons 56 appeared to be hearing impaired. Hearing loss in excess of 35 dB was found in 20% of the subjects in the screening program. In 18 cases no permission was given for fitting hearing aids. Hearing aid compliance was very high but benefit experienced by proxies was low. No benefit at all was found in 35% of the subjects.

**Conclusions:** Subjects experienced sufficient profit, but our study revealed poor benefit of hearing aid fittings according to caregivers. Several reasons are discussed.

*The submitted abstract describes a study that is part of a 5 year lasting research project. This project is sponsored by ZonMW, Programme Intellectual Disabilities. The study was approved in advance by the local Ethics Committee.*