Internet Interventions for Hearing Loss

Examining rehabilitation, self-report measures and internet use for hearing-aid users

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2014
In the future, audiological rehabilitation of adults with hearing loss will be more available, personalized and thorough due to the possibilities offered by the internet. By using the internet as a platform it is also possible to perform the process of rehabilitation in a cost-effective way. With tailored online rehabilitation programs containing topics such as communication strategies, hearing tactics and how to handle hearing aids it might be possible to foster behavioral changes that will positively affect hearing aid users.

Four studies were carried out in this thesis. The first study investigated internet usage among adults with hearing loss. In the second study the administration format, online vs. paper-and-pencil, of four standardized questionnaires was evaluated. Finally, two randomized controlled trials were performed evaluating the efficacy of online rehabilitation programs including professional guidance by an audiologist. The programs lasted over five weeks and were designed for experienced adult hearing-aid users.

It can be concluded that the use of computers and the internet overall is at least at the same level for people with hearing loss as for the general age-matched population in Sweden. Furthermore, for three of the four included questionnaires, the participants’ scores remained the same across assessment points. Finally, results from the two concluding intervention studies provide preliminary evidence that the internet can be used to deliver education and rehabilitation to experienced hearing aid users who report residual hearing problems and that their problems are reduced by the interventions; however, the content and design of the online rehabilitation program requires further investigation.

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