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LETTERS

Hearing Aids and Good Hearing Not the Same

A hearing aid is one-third product and two-thirds process.



PHOTO: ISTOCK

Jan. 19, 2017 7:06 p.m. ET

Regarding Temma Ehrenfeld's "How Trump Can Help Millions Hear" (op-ed, Jan. 12): A hearing aid is one-third product and two-thirds process. This is a fact consistently misunderstood by well-intentioned consumer advocates, who indicate cost as the sole barrier to hearing-aid acceptance. According to

National Institutes of Health data, the hearing-aid usage rate for U.S. adults with self-admitted hearing impairment is less than one-third. The highest hearing-aid usage rates are found in Norway (43%) and Switzerland (39%). Paradoxically, in these countries, averaging 41% hearing-aid use, hearing aids are provided free, without means tests, to all residents.

If free-market hearing-aid acceptance were simply a matter of cost, what accounts for the nonaccepting 59% of hearing-impaired Norwegians and Swiss?

Over-the-counter personal sound-amplification products can serve as a convenient entry point for those experiencing hearing loss. Unfortunately, the not uncommon subsequent negative experience can bias the individual against seeking future professional counsel and treatment for a remediable sensory impairment.

I have enjoyed more than 50 years of practice as a dispensing audiologist. My fees significantly exceed the average hearing-aid costs cited in the article. Yet, according to Healthgrades.com, I am the highest consumer-rated audiologist in the state of New York. The reason for my success rests in these patients' recognition of the continuing, long-term professional care component that I apply on their behalf.

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