

1. What information about hearing technology and related health care services is available to consumers who may be shopping for these goods and services? How useful do they find this information?

I believe this is a big issue in the hearing healthcare community. There is very little outreach regarding hearing loss. Hearing loss significantly affects quality of life and needs to be treated as a health concern by the medical community. Why do we have routine vision screenings, get annual teeth cleaning, but do not recommend annual or even baseline hearing evaluations. We need to focus more on outreach so patients can get the appropriate help.

2. How are hearing aids and other forms of hearing technology commonly distributed and sold? To what extent are new sellers of hearing devices, as well as new methods of distribution and sales, affecting the range of goods, services, and prices available to consumers?

Hearing aids are currently distributed in multiple ways. One can purchase them **online, in big box stores, in pharmacy's. This has been the case since I have been practicing**, so the distribution has not changed very much. Just more players have joined in. So I do not know why another class of devices needs to be legislated. **The EuroTrak and MarkeTrak survey's have time and time again shown that the best delivery model is utilizing a hearing healthcare professional to select, fit, train and COUNSEL the patient.** I think that new sellers are confusing patients more than anything.

3. How are innovations in hearing technology – including hearing aids, personal sound amplification products (PSAPs), and other devices and platforms – changing the competitive landscape and expanding the range of viable options to ameliorate hearing loss? What other innovations and developments are on the horizon?

They are confusing the patient, providing sub-par devices, discouraging patients from seeking professional help because they do not know the appropriate channels and their primary health providers are not educated on the importance of the role that audiologists play in providing appropriately fit hearing aids.

5. To what extent might existing federal and state regulations be modified or streamlined to better accommodate new technologies and business models, consistent with promoting competition and innovation while meeting legitimate consumer protection objectives?

I think you are missing the point, it is not the technology, it is the patient who needs to be the focus and what is BEST for the patient. Again, look to the surveys and research, cost is not the main factor, it is certainly a factor, but not the only factor. Look to the other countries, OTC devices do not improve access and in fact they reduce satisfaction. Confusing more people is what this will do, it will not help increase penetration. Federal regulations can provide health insurance benefits for patients, to break down some of the barriers to access.

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