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Towards equity of tinnitus management across the UK National Health Service:

In the UK tinnitus management has historically been the domain of the hearing therapist or senior audiologist. However, training in hearing therapy is no longer supported and so more now than ever the skills of the audiologist are critical to meeting the needs of this large patient group; so much so that the Department of Health expect them to upskill where needed to meet the psychological needs of tinnitus patients. Despite this challenge there are no UK practice guidelines for the management of tinnitus in adults. Practices vary hugely both within and between tinnitus services; assessment and treatment are typically guided by clinical experience of what is useful or what works, or may follow a trial and error approach. This is contrary to the Department of Health vision for equal access and equitable health outcomes for tinnitus patients. At the same time health services are under increasing economic pressures to deploy resources more effectively, so there is a need to demonstrate the value of tinnitus services, and how value may be continuously enhanced. As a translational research centre, at the NIHR Nottingham Biomedical Research Centre we primarily take knowledge from the basic sciences and develop or test that knowledge in a way that is clinically relevant. Current work focusses on how audiologists can best manage the psychological impact of tinnitus; the value of hearing aids in tinnitus management; how patients can self-manage using online programmes; the evidence base for emerging treatments; and the economic value of those treatments. Key outcomes from this work which are translating directly into UK tinnitus practice guidance for the management of tinnitus in adults will be presented