

Deafness Awareness Week 2005

MEDIA RELEASE

Oticon Foundation of New Zealand

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Affordability Major Issue for People Considering Hearing Aids

New research, released today at the beginning of Deafness Awareness week, has revealed for the first time that affordability was the major issue for New Zealanders who indicated that they needed hearing aids, but did not have them.

The research about hearing impaired people in New Zealand was conducted by Dr Anne Greville and sponsored by The Oticon Foundation.

It reveals:

- 29% of people with hearing disability (66,000) used hearing aids.
- An estimated 34,500 people indicated that they needed hearing aids, but did not have them.
- Affordability was the major issue for 23,000 people (67%).

Dr Greville's research collated all available data on the incidence of hearing impairment in this country. It also identified that the prevalence of hearing loss varies from 10.3 percent or just under 400,000 people who report hearing loss, to 0.05 percent or 2,100 people over 15 years who can't hear one person talking

The updated study shows that men are much more likely to suffer from hearing loss than women. Dr Greville says this difference is similar to that found in other developed countries, and appears to be attributable to noise-induced hearing loss.

Age has a major effect on hearing loss. People over 65 years of age are three and a half times more likely to have hearing loss than younger adults.

Audiologist and Oticon Foundation spokesperson, Karen Pullar says Dr Greville's research is invaluable.

"For the first time in New Zealand we have full information about the number of hearing impaired people, those wearing hearing aids, those who think they need hearing aids, and reasons for not seeking help in one document. This research is important to help remedy hearing loss among people and improve the quality of life for hearing impaired individuals and their families by identifying and addressing their needs," says Ms Pullar.

Copies of Dr Greville's updated research are available from www.oticon.org.nz/pdf/HearingimpaireddeafpeopleNZMar05a.pdf.

The Oticon Foundation (www.oticon.org.nz) is a charitable trust that aims to improve the lives of the hearing impaired in New Zealand through communication and knowledge.

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