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**Audiology Conference Brought Thousands of Audiologists to St. Louis**

AAA 2022 + HearTECH Expo was successful with over-the-counter hearing aids, Medicare coverage and best practices—some of many hot topics discussed

**RESTON, Va., April 12, 2022—**The American Academy of Audiology welcomed more than two thousand attendees from 20 countries to St. Louis, Missouri last week for its first in-person gathering since Covid. AAA 2022 + HearTECH Expo included 109 exhibitors occupying more than 20,000 square feet of trade show space at America’s Center Convention Complex, where the annual meeting was held.

“This conference was a perfect example of what audiologists can accomplish when working together to achieve a common goal,” said Patrick E. Gallagher, MBA, executive director of the American Academy of Audiology. “Audiologists planned and implemented an interactive conference where attendees learned from each other and left with a reinvigorated perspective on the future of the profession.”

The need for audiologists to work together and embrace change was a common theme throughout the conference and clearly articulated in Academy President Sarah Sydlowski’s general assembly address. The changes that will occur as a result of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aid sales, was a major topic during the conference and of interest to audiologists as well as manufacturers. There were multiple discussions on the potential impact of OTC sales including the resulting patient care challenges and opportunities. Among the many sessions and widely varied topics, Medicare coverage for hearing aids and audiology best practices were also highlighted in multiple sessions.

This was the first year, since Covid shutdowns began that the conference was held in person. “The transition of the AAA conference this year from an online platform to the in-person setting was truly remarkable and rewarding, said Wafaa Kaf, M.D., Ph.D. M.S., who served as the conference’s program chair. “We had a tremendous gathering of audiologists and audiology students who were able to come together to learn from one another and further advance the field. At this conference, the value of face-to-face interaction was abundantly clear.”

The conference was particularly important as growing numbers of Americans are reporting hearing loss. In 2017, the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Deafness & Other Communication Disorders stated that [48 million Americans suffer some type of hearing loss](https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/listen-infographic). And, in 2021, the [WHO stated that approximately 432 million people worldwide have disabling hearing loss—34 million of these are children](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss#:~:text=Over%205%25%20of%20the%20world's,will%20have%20disabling%20hearing%20loss.). It’s estimated that, by 2050, approximately 900 million people worldwide (or, one in every 10) will have disabling hearing loss. The numbers continue to grow annually. While age is a factor, there are growing numbers of young people with hearing loss. Conference discussions included ways that audiologists can help consumers to recognize and take action on hearing loss, how to overcome the stigma of hearing loss. With many new high-tech hearing aids coming to market (some that work with iPhones and other PDAs,) the need for patients to receive a diagnosis from an audiologist is needed more than ever before.

For more information or to locate an audiologist, click [here](https://www.audiology.org/consumers-and-patients/) or visit [www.audiology.org](http://www.audiology.org).

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**The American Academy of Audiology** is the world's largest professional organization of, by and for audiologists. Representing the interests of audiologists and future audiologists nationwide, the Academy is dedicated to providing quality hearing care services through professional development, education, research, and increased public awareness of hearing and balance disorders. For more information, visit [www.audiology.org](http://www.audiology.org).