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President's Message: Embracing Innovation, Protecting Hearing – CAA's position paper on OTC

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As Audiologists, we are united by a single goal: to help Canadians hear and communicate to the best of their ability. At the Canadian Academy of Audiology (CAA), we welcome any new product, therapy, or device that supports this mission—whether it's a groundbreaking medical technology, an innovative app, or, more recently, Over-The-Counter (OTC) hearing devices.

In the past year, Health Canada granted a Medical Device Class II licence for the Apple AirPods Pro II, which have a self-test feature and can adjust amplification to compensate for some hearing losses. This reflects a growing international trend, and the United States has already approved the sale of OTC hearing devices for adults with mild to moderate hearing loss.

The Canadian Academy of Audiology has recently published a new Position Paper on this topic:

1. **We support innovation that improves access**—OTC devices can be a valuable option if used appropriately and for the right person.
2. **2. We call for stronger, targeted federal labelling requirements**—for any device that produces sound, from consumer headphones to OTC hearing aids. This is not a vague call for regulation that the government can't or doesn't know how to implement, but a clear, actionable step. It also broadens the scope to include any consumer device that could contribute to hearing loss, while recognizing that the lines between device categories have become increasingly blurred. Proper labelling empowers Canadians to make informed choices and avoid unnecessary hearing damage.
3. **We advocate for safety through professional involvement**—only an Audiologist who performs real-ear measurements (REM) can truly verify optimal sound quality and ensure users are not exposed to potentially harmful sound levels.

While OTC devices may lower costs and improve access, they are not a one-size-fits-all solution. In some cases, they may be ineffective—or even harmful. We urge Canadians to consult an Audiologist before making hearing health decisions. As regulated healthcare professionals with advanced training, Audiologists are uniquely qualified to assess hearing, provide evidence-based recommendations, and guide patients toward safe and effective solutions.

In short, the CAA will continue to embrace technological progress, but never at the expense of safety, quality, or informed choice. By combining innovation with professional expertise, we can ensure that Canadians reap the benefits of new devices—while protecting one of their most

precious senses.

—Andreas Seelisch
President & Audiologist,