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Understanding the Impact of OTC: Market Insights and the Latest From Sony OTC Hearing Aids

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Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining today. When I was in graduate school to become an audiologist, I had the opportunity to go on some outreach trips to areas of rural Guatemala with the goal of helping kids get access to hearing healthcare and hearing aids if they needed them. After going on this trip for a couple years in a row, I started to see the huge impact it could have to bring services and care and resources, hearing aid resources to areas where people just didn't have it. And it started to make me wonder, what is the need for this at home, locally?

Right. Right in my backyard. And so when I was a grad student at the University of Washington, I worked for this program called the Hearing Aid Assistance program, where I primarily spent most of my time digging through boxes and boxes of old hearing aids to try to find something that was viable and usable for our patients that couldn't afford the prescription hearing aids that we were offering in clinic. And when I had the opportunity to fit one of these used hearing aids of older technology on someone who couldn't choose the hearing aid that they wanted, I immediately learned the impact you can have when you provide care for someone and access to high quality listening when they just can't get it any other way. I'm Annie Duchin.

I am the senior manager of OTC customer success and an audiologist by background. And this passion of reducing barriers for people to get good access to hearing healthcare and devices is what has driven me in my career. How I started as a pediatric audiologist at Seattle Children's and then eventually came to WS audiology to work on this partnership with Sony full time. Because what I really care about is helping people hear better sooner and getting them that access to high quality devices so they can get back to living their lives. Thanks for joining me today.

I'm really excited to talk to you about overall understanding the impact of OTC and what it means for both you as providers and also the people in the market with mild to moderate hearing loss who are looking for solutions.

So your learning outcomes today will be that after this course, we want you to be able to summarize the current state of the OTC market. What is happening both from a product perspective, a knowledge and understanding perspective, and the behavior of consumers or patients. We want you to be able to describe the potential value of offering OTC to patients with mild to moderate hearing loss. What is the value for you? What is the value for these people who are seeking solutions and to be able to explain the key features of the new Sony OTC hearing aids?

So we'll not only touch on our current portfolio offerings, but also what's new and what we've added to make it a more complete and robust choice for lots of people with mild to moderate hearing loss.

We're going to start with something a little bit different today. You might be in your office, you might be at home, you might be in clinic. But what I'd like you to please do, if you're willing and able, is either to start by standing up or by raising your hand for a quick activity that we'll do together.

So I would like you to stay standing or keep your hand raised if you see the value in hearing care professionals having OTC as available as an option for patients.

Of the hundreds of hearing care professionals Sony and WSA have trained over the last couple of years, the number one concern I see is about about offering OTC is not understanding the potential value of adding otc's for you as the provider and for your patients. Stay standing or keep your hand raised. If you feel confident in your knowledge about OTC hearing aids, those of you who sat down or put your hand down, you are not alone thinking about the same group of hearing care professionals. Our quick OTC seminars were able to increase OTC confidence by over 80%, and that's exactly what we hope to do here today. We hope that the information that we can provide will help provide confidence for you as a provider to be able to discuss OTC products, to be able to discuss the market, what's available for your patients, and be that trusted source of information.

When you think about this exercise, what does it tell us about where we are? Where are hearing care professionals in this new world of OTC? And we know that from a hearing care professional perspective, we're primarily in a state of learning and understanding. What is this new category? What is available?

How can they bring value? And why would I even want to talk about them? And so that's part of what we'll touch on together today.

So we will talk about the current state of the OTC market. We'll look at top considerations when it comes to the products, as well as what's actually within our portfolio. What do our products offer? What's new in our product portfolio? We'll talk about unlimited best in class support.

And that is support both for you as the provider as well as patients or users of these products, and how our team can help alleviate some of the needs regarding support that your patients might need with these products. And then we'll talk about hearing care professional considerations and tools. What's in it for you. What do we have for you to be successful if this is something that you're ready to talk about with your patients?

Let's dive into the OTC market and what we know so far.

So let's talk about this need for OTC. For decades, we've had people with mild to moderate hearing loss who simply won't wear hearing aids. For those of us who have been in clinic, we've heard all the reasons why. Maybe it's cost. Maybe they're not ready.

Maybe they don't think they have a \$5000 to \$10,000 problem, or there's too many appointments, or the hearing's just not bad enough. Yet we've heard it all when it comes to the reasons that someone might delay doing something about their hearing and their hearing loss. So if we look at this chart here,

what you see represented is that the purple is. Excuse me, the purple is people who have purchased a prescription hearing aid. The black bars show the various age groups of those who could benefit, who have not purchased anything.

This is a huge gap, right? And it's not totally new to us that there is this gap, especially of people with mild to moderate hearing loss. This is representing people with mild to moderate hearing loss. But it's pretty eye opening to think 26 million people could benefit from an OTC hearing aid solution or could benefit from a hearing solution and aren't doing anything about it. And this is exactly the opportunity that led to the start of the OTC market thinking, how can we get people to enter their hearing healthcare journey, especially these people with mild to moderate hearing loss?

What could be a good stepping stone into this experience for them, and how can we get them to do something sooner? So there is a large group of people in this age range of 50 to 79 who could benefit from hearing aids and aren't purchasing. And this is the call out here. What is the way we can find the balance of if they come into us and they offer, we offer them that gold standard solution and they're not ready for it, what can we do to help get them going in their process so they don't walk out with nothing?

So when we think about the market, let's consider where people are in this journey. This is a new market. It goes from an experience of awareness down to decision. Now, when you think about the awareness part of this funnel, this is where we see most people landing in for now, in a new, new space. Not surprising, right?

What I want to call out is that Sony and WSA, as a partnership, are really dedicated to putting attention and making sure that this awareness category is growing. And the important thing about this awareness category is that this doesn't just bring awareness to OTC hearing aids, right? It brings awareness to hearing healthcare as a whole, drives people into clinics, lets them understand, hey, I need to do something about my hearing loss sooner rather than later. From the awareness section, we see that

there are a group of people that come down to consideration. Not only are people aware that OTC hearing aids are thing they're available, but a lot of people are considering, should I buy them?

Are they right for me? So when we look at the Google Analytics of the search for OTC hearing aids, it's searched over 15,000 times a month. Think about that. That's a massive search that leads to people making a decision about what to do next. So we do see several people getting down to this decision phase in this new market.

So you'll see it tapers down as it continues. And this is totally expected, right. As people are learning and they're considering, ultimately many of them will decide that this product is something that will be helpful for them. But you might be wondering, okay, so where do hearing care professionals fit into this? Well, we've done some previous research to look into the fact that over 60% of people are likely to look for information about OTC hearing aids from hearing care professionals.

And so they're probably somewhere in this awareness consideration phase, right? And over 80% of them would like to purchase them from a hearing care professional. And you may be wondering, okay, if this is the case, like, why aren't people kicking down my door asking about OTC hearing aids? And what I want to talk about next is how often people are buying them and where they're buying them. And what does this consumer or this new patient look like for OTC hearing aids?

So the market value for 2023 was around \$123 million. To give you a concept of what that translates into, that's over 220,000 pairs of OTC hearing aids sold. So people are not only aware of them considering them, but they're also buying them. And when you think about where they're buying them, they're typically buying them in the place that they're easiest to find. So we see most purchases for OTC hearing aids happening in a retail space right now, and it doesn't mean, it does not mean that they don't want to buy these products from you as a hearing care professional.

It just means that that might be harder to find. Think about your website or your clinic. Do you have anything in there that indicates you're even an expert to talk about OTC hearing aids, or let alone that you might offer them. If not, they might go somewhere where it's just easier to find it. And we want you to be a part of this solution, knowing that people aren't just looking and searching, but they are purchasing them.

As this market continues to grow, the exciting thing about this is that OTC hearing aids are doing exactly what we had hoped they're doing. They're expanding the market for who is getting involved in doing something about their hearing healthcare. The majority of people who wear Sony hearing aids are younger, first time wearers doing something sooner than that typical seven to ten years we've heard for such a long time, and entering that hearing healthcare space earlier and helping give their brain access to the sound they need to be successful. So the important call out here is that we want you as providers, not to miss out on this opportunity. People are looking, they are searching, and we want you to be the source of information and ultimately the products, if that's what you're ready to do with your clinic, so that they can do all the beginning of their healthcare journey with you.

And as that progresses, as their needs change, they've already established rapport with you in your clinic.

Let's talk about top OTC considerations.

First and foremost, who is eligible, right? Who are these products designed for? Per the FTA FDA, they are for people who are 18 years and older. They are for adults, right, who have perceived mild to moderate hearing loss. The FDA calls out perceived mild to moderate hearing loss because this person or these patients are not technically required to do a hearing evaluation to purchase OTC products.

But we at Sony and WSA, we highly encourage at least our online screener before someone purchases these products so that they can get an idea if they're a good audiological candidate for this product, they should have no medical contraindications. So all OTC hearing aids that are FDA cleared and monitored should have all these medical contraindications listed in several places for us. They're on the outside of the box, very clearly stated that you should see a physician or a hearing care professional before proceeding if you have one of the medical contraindications. We also call this out on our support team. When people call our team and ask if the product might be right for them, and it's also within our app, it's something that they have to click through and say, I do not have these medical contraindications before they proceed.

And we're serious about that, because we're serious about safety when it comes to these products and making sure that they end up on the right ears for the right people. So there's who's an eligible candidate? Right? And then who's a good candidate? Obviously, a good candidate, first and foremost, is someone who's eligible for it.

And then what we call it is a proactive learner with a basic knowledge of how to use a smartphone, phone or tablet. We phrase it this way because what we have learned over the last couple of years is that you don't have to be a tech genius to use our products, but you have to be savvy enough to understand how to use your smartphone to download an app and work through that app. And I will say we have a range of tech abilities for people who use our products. And it's part of where our support team can come in and help people with everything from how to download an app, all the way to getting through that self fitting and setup process and ensuring the right people can have success with our products. Someone who's interested in the self treatment, it's your job as a provider to help explain to your patients the difference between the journey with OTC and the journey with a prescription hearing aid.

Most of our providers who are very successful with OTC have a very clear line on how they help people with OTC. That line looks a little bit different for everyone, but it might look something like, hey, if you're looking for an OTC solution, it's more independent. Here's your product. If you have any questions, you can call me, or you can call the Sony support line. So you can see how some providers scaffold in the Sony support line to offset some of that support time required for OTC.

And you might compare that to what comes with the prescription hearing aid journey and how that would look different for someone both in the devices, the experience, the appointments, and the access to you as a provider. Someone who's budget conscious. There are many people who might not have the resources or simply are not ready to spend the amount of money that prescription hearing aids cost. And so typically, typically, price is a strong driver for someone who is not quite ready to do that prescription journey and may benefit from one of our premium OTC solutions. So when you think about these good candidates for the product, one of the things that we do at WSA and Sony is spend a lot of time and research thinking about not just what do we think people want from OTC devices, but what do they actually want, right?

Let's hear from people directly and making sure that our portfolio can offer that.

So through the help of a third party research group, we did a large quantitative survey of over 800 people. And we looked at what do people want from these devices? And this is people who have either already bought OTC hearing aids or are considering buying OTC hearing aids. And what you see here is not super surprising, right? It's really not any different from what people want from a prescription hearing aid, because they're buying a hearing aid and they have some of the general same drivers and needs as anyone with hearing loss.

So they want to be able to use it everywhere. They want to be able to use it at their home watching tv. And they also want to be able to use it when they go out to friends or maybe when they go to an event

that they have a hard time hearing at. They want to screen us. So we know we are still fighting the stigma of hearing loss.

I think we will continue to do that for a long time. And so we have lots of people who are like, I'm ready to hear better, but I don't want it to be super obvious. I don't want it to look like my grandpa's hearing. Aidan, right. Has to be comfortable.

We know that something that is not comfortable in the ear, people just won't fit. And so that's a priority that we have. And we want to make sure it's easy to handle. So we have people, especially in this independent journey, who have a range of not only tech savviness, but dexterity, skills, comfort with technology. And so we try to make all aspects of our product, including our app and the product itself, easy to handle.

And then, unsurprisingly, they want to hear better. So we make sure that our products don't just look good, that they sound really good, and that they perform really well in situations like in noise, where we know that people with mild to moderate hearing loss struggle the most.

Now we're going to dig into the portfolio of our products. You as listeners and hearing care professionals, you may have attended some of our other educational sessions, and this might be the first time you ever are learning about Sony OTC hearing aids. And so what I'm going to do is a quick overview of our current products in our portfolio and some of their key features, and then we'll dive into our new product and how that has expanded our portfolio and offerings for people. Now, before we talk about the products individually, I think it's super important to call out that all of our Sony OTC products are FDA cleared, self fitting, premium OTC hearing aids that are built for people with perceived mild to moderate hearing loss to be safe, effective, and offer high quality listening experience. When you think about these hearing aids, these form factors might look familiar to you.

And we do that on purpose. We make our Sony OTC hearing aids the way that real hearing aids are made. They have the fundamental features of prescription hearing aids, like noise reduction, directionality feedback manager, wind, noise suppression. All these features that we know someone needs to be extra successful in the environments that are most challenging. Why do we make them so good?

We do it on purpose because when we think about the whole market of what's offered for OTC devices, we actually care about helping people hear better, right? So we know that these fundamental features are needed for someone to hear better and be successful in these environments. And so that's what we focus on for our products, making sure that we can offer those things that people really need and want from a hearing aid. Okay, let's zoom in on the products individually. First, we have our c ten.

This was one of the first products that we launched. I'm sure you've seen it before. Have you seen anything about our Sony hearing aids? It's small and discreet. Cic style.

It's our smallest OTC hearing aid designed for comfort. It uses a size ten battery with up to 70 hours of runtime, which we are constantly reminding our users to pop open that battery door like with any other hearing aid to help preserve that battery life. It has some ear to ear directionality to support in noise, and just to drill in on that a little bit more. So our c ten devices have one mic on each device, and so they work together to help suppress noise. And also, you get the benefit of that Pinna effect from the deeply seated Cic style.

The rc ten uses vented click sleeves. We'll talk a little bit more about which sleeves the devices use and how they're different across time, but they come with vented click sleeves for that natural listening experience. All of our products are self fitting and use our Sony hearing control app for that self fitting process, which we'll talk about in detail. And we'll also touch on today the features that we've updated in our app along with our new product.

Let's move on to the other product in our portfolio is our e ten. Our e ten is our rechargeable earbud style has up to 26 hours on a single charge. And this case is also a charge and use on the go. So when the case is charged, the e ten devices get up to three full charges on the go as well. It is Bluetooth.

Excuse me, compatible for audio streaming for iOS only. Now let's just take a time out here to talk about compatibility. The C ten, e ten, and our new product, which I'll talk about in just a moment, are all compatible with Android and iOS devices for all self fitting and hearing aid function. And then on top of that, our e ten offers audio streaming for iOS devices.

Our e ten also is a little bit different in the sense it's a little bit different. Style has room for two microphones on each device, and what that does is allow for even more advanced directionality options. So there's both an automatic directionality, true directionality with two mics on each device, and manual microphone adjustments within the app. So someone could literally choose the listening span of their microphones for directionality options in a noisy space. Ip 68 rating, so highly durable, excellent for active patients, someone who's looking to wear it on the go, exercising things like that.

And again, it uses our Sony hearing control app.

Here's the really exciting part. I get to introduce our new product, our Cre C 20 device. We are so excited about this from Sony and WSA. We spend a lot of time thinking about how can we build on what our portfolio already offers, what are people asking for? And the customer service team, the team that I help lead, we get a lot of calls from people who love our c ten.

They love the discreetness of it. But those size ten batteries can be tricky, even for us as providers sometimes, let alone somebody who might have some challenge with dexterity or vision, things like that. And they're not ready to move up to the e ten. They don't want to make a style change for

rechargeability necessarily on that key feature alone. We're so excited to have the c 20, which offers the rechargeability and still maintains the discreteness of that Cic style.

So let's dive a little bit more into what those key features look like.

So as I mentioned, the c 20 is a rechargeable. Cic has up to 28 hours runtime on a single charge, which is amazing and more time than anyone would ever need for a full day. Like our e ten, it has a case that can charge on the go, so up to three charges on the go as well. And when we think about the inside of our c 20 and what it does, how we can improve it, is that we thought about what does our c ten do well and how can we make that better. So we optimize a lot of the features of the c ten to make them more effective for the c 20.

So we have optimized the adaptive noise reduction feature to make sure hearing a noise is a priority, improve the sound quality. So in a bit, we'll get into what is a hearing profile and how does that affect our devices. But functionally, what we did is boost the low frequency gain here a little bit for the c 20 compared to the c ten. We adapted the design to make it more accessible. So that was everything from comfort to usage.

So the c 20 uses different sleeves than the e ten and the c ten. And that was to support the design as well as ensure that all day comfort that people are looking for. And also, we wanted the devices themselves to be easy to manipulate and use. So the red. The right hearing aid has a red marker.

The left hearing aid has a tactile dot. So when someone is holding the devices in their hands, they can quickly tell which is which. We added some additional inbox supplies because we want to make sure that care and maintenance is easy for people. And so we added some wax guard replacements to the c 20 kit. That's something that we heard from people that is important and something that we wanted to try out this product to test effectiveness for that care and maintenance for our patients improve the

durability for these devices.

We can give it an IP 68 rating now because it has no more battery door, so less risk of moisture or dust seeping in, because the battery door is no longer there, because it's rechargeable. And of course, it uses our app.

Here's a quick glance at what comes in the kit for each of these products. A c ten, e ten, and C 20. You can see that all products come with a pair of devices. They're all pre fit with a size small sleeve. Now, the important call out is that the CX and e ten use what's called our click sleeves, and the C 20 uses our new sleeves.

And if you think about the products across the portfolio, the c ten is fit with an open click sleeve. That's to allow for a natural listening experience. The e ten is fit with a closed click sleeve. That's to support streaming and fuller low gain listening experience. The C 20 is fit with a closed sleeve, different closed sleeves, and the other devices.

And that's to support that full or richer low, low gain boost in the devices. They all come pre fit with a size small. And then within the box, there's an extra small, medium and large. So that the page themselves, or with some help from our online resources, our support or from you can help decide which is their preferred size. And then they can order additional sleeves either online through the Sony website or through you as a provider if you'd like to offer them.

In addition, what we see here is some cleaning and maintenance tools. As I mentioned, the C 20 has wax guards replacements in the box. That's new for us as we continue to prioritize the importance of maintenance and care of our devices so they can keep working. Right. When someone calls in, their number one concern is usually something like, my right hearing aid just stopped working.

And almost always it's because of wax. And these are issues and challenges that we anticipated because this is how hearing aids work, right? And so if someone who has a c ten or an e ten right now needs wax guard replacements, our customer support team helps provide that access to that. It's also something that you as a provider, we could clue you into which wax cards they're using, and you as a provider could also offer them as a service to your patients.

Here's a layout of all of our products side by side. We want you to have the opportunity to think about if someone asks you about OTC, specifically Sony OTC, how you would be able to decide how to offer them the c ten versus the c 20 versus the e ten. So this is here for you as a resource. The way I would describe this quickly and concisely is that the C ten is one of our most discreet options. It's battery operated and it's the most economical.

The C 20 has a boost in that sound quality for that fuller, richer listening experience. Still very discreet, but is rechargeable and more durable. The e ten is our earbud style, rechargeable, durable, and also adds the opportunity for streaming to iOS devices. So calling out here that they could all be an excellent option for your patients with mild to moderate hearing loss. It just depends what their priorities are when it comes to choosing a device.

Now, you may be wondering, in your mind, okay, these products look good. They seem really good, but how do they actually measure up? How do they perform? And we're going to look a little bit data and outside sources to see how they measure up.

So let me orient you to what's happening on this page here. What we've done is called out real ear measurements for a prescription hearing aid and an OTC hearing aid. The blue line is the is the prescription hearing aid. The green line is our OTC hearing aid, and we're looking at real ear measurements for someone with a mild to moderate hearing loss in their right ear, because that's who these products are for. What do you notice?

Right away, you might notice that the OTC hearing aid related measurements aren't as good as the prescription hearing aids for a first fit. Not surprising, right? Prescription hearing aids are the gold standard for usage and we expect them to outperform OTC hearing aids. But what else do you notice?

Although the OTC hearing aid line is not perfect, it's pretty darn close. You can see that across the frequency range, it's within five decibels of targets for this user. And let's call out why this could be important. First of all, these are both first fit, meaning that the provider hasn't made any adjustments to the real ear for the prescription hearing aid and the Sony OTC user has only just finished the self fitting, so they haven't done any customization in the product yet. Couple call outs.

Number one, if you remember, most of the people who are using Sony OTC are first time hearing aid users. And what do we as providers know about first time hearing aid users? They don't always like to be at 100% gain to start despite our wishes. Right? And so this OTC line might be a great place for someone to start who has a prescription hearing aid.

The second call out here is that there haven't been any adjustments made to the product. And with the product, there are ways, although that you can't program them, that your patient could be encouraged to adjust them to boost that gain across the frequencies to meet targets. For example, we'll talk about customization in the app later, but there is an area called the adjust loudness section, which is a right left slider, looks like a volume control if you're just a user who doesn't have experience with hearing aids, but what it actually is is a primary gain control. So bumping up the gain, this is the right ear on the right side. Moving that right ear slider up would bump up the gain across the frequencies for this person using this device, and they could easily meet targets.

So it's a combination of understanding, you know, that best fit, first fit start for someone. And also what can you do, what can you counsel within the OTC device app to get them closer to target? If you're

someone who wants to run real ear and make some adjustments? The real call out here is that we were looking at performance compared to prescription and OTC hearing aids. And while it's important because we want to understand the quality of these OTC hearing aids and what we can provide.

What we should really be comparing is OTC to OTC hearing aids. And the reason for that is OTC hearing aids are meant to be a separate category than prescription hearing aids. They provide a different need, a different experience. And if you really want to make a decision about which is the right OTC product for someone, it shouldn't be an OTC versus prescription hearing aid, but rather, what does Sony offer compared to other prescription. Excuse me, what does Sony offer compared to other OTC options that are out there?

So in the OTC world today, you may have noticed there are a ton of options out there. And it's important to call out that there is a very wide variety of the quality of OTC products available. There is everything ranging from something that's called an OTC hearing aid, which is really more like a glorified amplifier with some presets, all the way up to premium OTC offering, like what Sony offers, which is self fitting, FDA cleared, 510K certified, all very fancy ways to say, we follow all the rules, and we've created a device that is meant to be more personalized in experience and unique to that person picking up the hearing aids. So when you look at this chart here, what we're comparing to is other devices in that premium category, that premium OTC category. And there's a lot of things that are offered out there.

But what we want to call are some major advantages that we have. The first thing is our style. We offer three unique and discreet styles with prescription grade technology. We do this on purpose. We have chosen these styles as a way to.

To hopefully, over time, combat the stigma around hearing loss. We hear lots of people still say, I don't want to wear hearing aid. Like my grandpa were squeaking all the time, hanging out over his ear. And so we choose styles that not only look aesthetically good, but are excellent performers in what they

offer. And so we purposely build our hearing aids in the Sony WSA partnership off of form factors within the WSA offerings, because we know that someone who has mild to moderate hearing loss, who chooses an OTC product, while it's a different experience, we still want it to be a really good, effective, and high quality experience for them.

We have excellent battery versatility and battery life. Without this, you don't get to use your hearing aid, right? So we wanted to give people lots of options of how they can use their hearing aids so both battery operated and rechargeable, and also that they can rely on much more than a full day's use for continuous use of these products. Durability. Durability matters and we have high durability against dust, moisture, exposure, and then our customer service.

So we have reliable and superior expert support. You might be thinking, this is an OTC hearing aid, like why do people need help with it? And I think we as providers know the answer to that. We always knew the answer that people will need help because the hearing aid is a hearing aid in terms of someone being a new user, having a learning curve. And so we, through Sony and WSA, offer super comprehensive support, both for the people who are using our product and for you as providers to make sure that whatever level of help someone needs, we can provide it.

So when we think about these products, right, it's one thing for us, for me as someone who works at WSA, to say these are great, but what we also look to is what are outside labs, what are outside sources saying about the performance of our products and how they support people with mild to moderate hearing loss.

The first thing I want to talk about here is probably what your eyes went to first, which is this call out of the best performing OTC hearing aid at Best Buy. And that's our e ten. Why am I calling this out? It's not actually because we want people to run into Best Buy and buy our hearing aids, but it's rather to show you that when somebody does walk into Best Buy and there is a wall of hearing aids that range in

a level of offerings from very simple to very sophisticated like our devices, it's hard for people to know what to choose, especially without guidance. Now there is some guidance in the retail space, but it's certainly not like if they walk into your office and talk to an expert about hearing healthcare and about hearing aids.

This call out from a third party source is important to us because we want to know that of all the things that are there, ours is one of the best. Now, even more relevant and more interesting, I think, as a provider is looking at what hear advisor and hearing tracker is doing in their third party and independent labs testing OTC hearing aids and prescription hearing aids over a range of criteria. And both our e ten and c ten were called out as expert choice awards, which we're very proud of. That's both about form and function. We have the QR code here.

So if you want to look at all the criteria that the hear advisor and hearing tracker lab uses to identify them, you're welcome to. And then what I'm most proud of is this call out about the best hearing aid in noise. So this, again, was a hearing tracker, hear advisor, lab test. And it was not just for OTC hearing aids. Actually, it was OTC hearing aids and prescription hearing aids were tested, and our e ten s were rated as the best hearing aids in noise.

And again, this is not about comparing OTC to prescription. But the call out here is that these hearing aids work, and they work well in noise. And that matters because we know that people with mild to moderate hearing loss, that's where they're struggling. That's where they're going to notice the difference. They're not going to notice the difference with their hearing aids as much when they're sitting at loan, at home watching tv, but when they step into their favorite coffee shop or to see a friend or family member, this is where they really need their hearing aids to step up for them.

And we know for sure that our e ten s can do that for them. What we're going to do now is lean into the app, because the app is something that has to be used with all the products for setup and self fitting.

And I want to explain to you how the app works and how we've updated it, along with the addition to our c 20 in our product portfolio.

So all three products use the Sony hearing control app. In just a moment, we'll talk about how the usage of the app goes. But functionally, you would download the app and then choose which device you have, c ten, e ten, or c 20. And the app would walk the person, step by step, screen by screen, exactly. Through what they need to do to successfully pair and set up their hearing aids within this self guided process.

We want it to be a quick setup. That's our whole goal. Right. And there's a combination of both smart app capabilities and customization happening for that person to succeed with the app and the product as a whole. So the way that it works is that the person logs in, they choose their device, they compare their devices to the app, and then they do what's called the self fitting process.

The self fitting process. You've heard me mention it many times. It is one thing that divides quality of these products. Overall, those products that have self fitting have a much closer fit to someone's hearing loss than products that don't have any self fitting process and are just amplifying arbitrarily for our devices in the self fitting. Functionally, what happens is the person is wearing the devices in each ear and there is an in situ evaluation in each ear one at a time.

What they do is they identify the softest sound they can hear, similar to what you would do in a booth, although much more abbreviated. And it gives an idea of what the initial gain and baseline frequency setting should be. And we'll talk about that hearing profile on the next slide. What happens then, when the initial settings are decided by the algorithm based on the responses from the user, is that the user can customize in many ways. Now, before I tell you about customization, you might be wondering, like, what if somebody is all over the place, they're unreliable in their testing?

Or what if they have more than a mild to moderate hearing loss? This is where the smart app comes in. So if somebody is being really unreliable in their testing for a certain frequency, it will have them repeat that frequency until we have a reliable response, a repeated threshold response in that ear at that frequency. From a patient safety perspective, if someone has a hearing loss significantly greater than a mild to moderate hearing loss, a pop up will come up on their screen and ask them to call customer service, where our tier two audiologist will explain to them. It's very likely you have too much hearing loss to be supported by these products, and they'll encourage them to see a hearing care professional instead.

There's also a safety call for when there's a significant asymmetry between the areas where we also call it, they should see a provider before proceeding. And we built all this in that extra part in because we want to make sure, sure that these devices end up on the right ears for the right people, that they can actually help them. So let's talk a little bit more about customization, and then we'll talk about what a hearing profile is. So after setup, the first thing that someone's going to see is a screen called adjust loudness. That's that right left slider I was talking to you about when we were discussing real ear measurements here.

They can individually adjust the volume of their ears through each of their hearing aids. Then there's an opportunity for remote control section, which we'll talk a little bit more about, where they can adjust volume in both ears at the same time. They can adjust sound balance, which is a bass treble slider. And for the e ten, they can also adjust the directionality focus of their microphones. And then the last main section of customization is called fine tuning.

Of course, it is not fine tuning like we do as providers, but rather they have the opportunity to choose what is the main challenge they're having and what's the description of that? Like my own voice is too loud, and then the app will give them some predetermined solutions to try that. Actually adjust the gain

and frequency settings in the background. They get to listen to that option. If they don't like the solution, they can say nope, and they'll get up to six solutions for that person, that specific request to try.

There are many categories in which they can choose from, and a hot tip for you is that there is a category in there for feedback. So if you have someone calling out that, hey, you know, it's beeping, buzzing, those, all those signs of feedback, and you can verify the fit is correct, the next step would be to drop into that feedback section of fine tuning. Now that we've talked about the general self guided process, I want to zoom a little bit more in from a provider perspective of what is happening during this self fitting section and what is a hearing profile.

So a hearing profile are these initial gains and frequency settings. It's a predetermined setting of gain based on broad frequency shaping of the hearing loss. So these hearing profiles for each devices were designed based on thousands of audiograms with mild to moderate results. So after the hearing care, the hearing profile check, that's the self fitting test, selects a hearing profile. It applies one to each ear.

So what it's doing is the smart app algorithm is paying attention to what are the responses from the user or the patient from each ear, and that is choosing the hearing profile. That is the best fit line compared to their responses. This is not something you or your patient can choose. It's something the app chooses based on that hearing profile check. And I'm showing you as providers, so you have an idea of what's happening in the background, right.

I want you to be very clear about what is this device doing, how is it performing, how is it making decisions? And so this is how it would start this before the customization, this would be the first fit, so to speak. An important call out here is that it could be different profiles for different ears. So say someone's using the e ten. They could be on profile two for the right ear and profile four for the left ear.

Let's talk about device compared to device here. So you can see the c ten has four hearing profiles, the c 20 has six. This is where you heard me talking about the boost and low frequency gain. You can see the frequency response here, how the gain starts sooner and the lower frequencies for the c 20 and also for the e ten. And this is how we talk about that richer listening experience as well.

When it comes to the c 20. So these gain graphs are in all the user guides for all of our products. It's also something we could provide to you. But what I would challenge you as a provider when you're seeing someone with OTC who's talking about OTC, or you might want to fit or offer OTC too, instead of focusing exactly on the responsibilities here, hearing profiles, considering more what are the number one priorities of your patient when it comes to an OTC product? And of course, assuming they have mild to moderate hearing loss, if they want something discreet and they want something rechargeable, I'd zoom right into the c 20.

Right? If they want something rechargeable and they really want to stream with an iPhone, the e ten is a choice for them. But we wanted to make sure that you, as providers, have this background knowledge about what the devices are doing and how they're acting based on that hearing profile check experience. And remember, this is just the initial setup. So after a patient does this hearing profile check, then they get the opportunity to walk through all those phases of customization that we talked about a couple slides ago so they can both adjust volume and sound quality of their devices after this initial fitting.

Now I'd like to focus in on what we have adjusted and optimized in the app experience. So what's different about Sony OTC is that OTC devices, our OTC devices, are app dependent versus like a prescription device, which is the app could be an extra thing. And when devices are app dependent, it matters that you update and make the app experience better as time goes on. And so there's been several improvements to make the user experience easier overall with our app, along with releasing the

c 20. And so some of the key call outs here are visual improvements.

Something as simple as making sure there is good contrast between the header and the main screen so people know where they are. In the process, we made it easier to access help. So within these features here, like you can see, this is the remote control screen from the e ten has the volume sound balance, and that little circle on the right indicates the directionality section. We added this little help button so that someone could know within a specific section exactly what's happening and what it does.

Then we wanted to make it easier to set up our hearing aids. So our hearing aids have some specific criteria that need to be completed to ensure that the phone and the hearing aids can communicate with each other for pairing and setup. And one of them is that the phone needs to be unmuted. Now, what we learned is that a lot of people don't know how to unmute their phone. And so we added in this feature where someone could check to see if their phone is unmuted, because we found that that was a common reason people were struggling in setup.

We wanted to make that easier for people. We want to make the overall interface easier to use, the menu easier to navigate. We have always, always collected satisfaction survey information about what people like about the app, what they don't like, how we can change it. We've now made it more obvious. That becomes a pop up to remind someone, hey, we want to hear from you, so our team can make this better and better.

Navigation. Before, it was not as easy to go back and forth in the app. It was really a forward journey in the app process. And we heard from people, I need to go back and see what was on the screen, or I want to make sure I understood that correctly, or I did it correctly. And so we added back arrows and easier forward backward navigation anywhere we could in the app.

From an audiological perspective, there's something that the c 20 does that's different than the e ten and the c ten. So this is our remote control screen for the c 20. And the main difference here is that for the c 20, these different, these changes that someone makes in this remote control section are retained. So that means when someone turns the devices on and off, their c 20 will remember this section. How our c ten and e ten work is that these are temporary changes, and that somebody, if they make an adjustment, say they walk into a coffee shop and they turn down the volume a little bit, and they adjust the sound balance a little bit.

The hearing aids will continue to hold those settings until the devices are turned to on and off, and then it will come back to the middle. What we heard from people with the c 20 is, I see this screen frequently. I want my hearing aids to remember them. And so that's something we're trying with our c 20 devices now. And in addition to that, our sound balance slider, the bass treble slider for our c ten and e ten is primarily a treble slider.

It really affects frequencies above 1400 hertz the most. But we heard from people that, I want to boost the low sometimes, too. Of course, they don't describe it quite that way, but they want the option to do that, have that quality experience. And so, for the c 20, our sound balance slider also affects and boosts the low frequencies more effectively.

Now, throughout this process, you might be wondering what happens if somebody needs help and we've touched on this a little bit. So there are robust support options. I think for you as a hearing care provider, the most important thing is that you're thinking about, how do I want to offer help and support to my patients? What is the level I want to offer? And that's a personal choice based on your clinic and your clinic needs.

And that's something that we are here to discuss with you to make sure we find the right fit for you, which is the balance of how can you support your patients in a way with OTC that's authentic to you,

but also how can we be mindful of your time and energy and all the other requirements of a clinical day? That's why we have this super robust support team. This is built both for people who are users of our products and for you as professionals. So our Sony product support site has tons of information for independent troubleshooting and learning and self education. We have robust Q and a YouTube videos about almost any maintenance and care perspective for the devices.

So for those people who are really independent learners, it's all there for them. They never to pick up the phone. They never have to call you. They have what they need. But we also knew that people will need different levels of help.

We knew that there are going to be some people who never, ever need us. And we knew that there are some people who don't know how to download an app, but are really motivated to use our products. And so our support team is built to cover that whole span of needs. It's why we created a two tier support team. Everybody talks to our tier one, which our Sony sound agents.

These agents are experts in our products. They've been working that for them, with them for years now. They will help your patients or users of our products today with things like pairing, which we spend too much time on as providers, or other things like that. And then, since they're new providers, excuse me, since they're new patients, what we'll often hear at the end of a setup call is my voice sounds funny, right? And here's where our audiologists get to step in and do some counseling around.

Okay, what are adjustments can we make to make sure you're comfortable? Can we suggest for you to make, but also, what is just the learning curve of being a new person wearing hearing aids? So, in the same way that you could call your manufacturer support team for help yourself, you as a hearing care professional could always contact our support team. We're here to help you as well, via call, chat or text. And here to provide whatever education is helpful for you or your patients for trial return for credit and repair.

We are very mindful to be very clear about this. We know that not always the correct people will pick up these products in your office. I'm sure they will. But that doesn't mean that it will be the product they want to leave with in the end. And so we make it very clear they have a 45 day trial period for you as a provider.

It means you have 140 days to return the product for credit. So that's that 45 day return period for your, excuse me, trial period for your patient, plus 90 days of stockholding, plus an extra five days. Because we know sometimes that patients come in that last day of the return period from a return perspective, they need to be returned from where they purchase. So if they purchase from you, they return to you. If they purchase from Sony, they return to Sony, repair is a little bit different.

They could do repair through you. You could do this through a wholesale manufacturer, just like you would with some other products, if that's something that you don't want to spend your time doing. Our Sony team does this every day for people who need help from whatever channel they purchase it from, will help with any repair or exchange needs that they have. And lastly, from a warranty perspective, there is a one year repair warranty. An important call out here is that our team has been mindful to offer unlimited and best in class support.

And so if you or your patient have any questions or concerns about your products, regardless of when they purchase them, please contact our support team. And we always do the best we can to support someone with a successful outcome.

We're going to finish our conversation today about talking about what considerations and tools there are for you as a hearing care professional when it comes to OTC hearing aids, we're going to dive right into the key benefits of discussing and offering OTC in clinic. And you've heard me touch on a little bit of this throughout our conversation today. But the first is just being a trusted resource of information.

You are the expert in hearing healthcare and hearing products, and at a minimum, you should be able to confidently describe to people what's out there from the Otc market, what's a safe and high quality choice, what is the difference between an OTC hearing aid and a prescription hearing aid. And we want to continue to help educate you to be that trusted resource of information.

If they can't get that information from you, they have to go looking online. And while we, as WSA and Sony, do our very best to make that very clear, it can still be a confusing journey for people. And so if they come to you in the first place, we want to make sure that you're ready and equipped to offer them that education in line with the professional education and information you give them today. Today we want to make sure you have a solution for all patients. I want you to think about the real ear measurements that we saw previously and imagine that was your patient.

Imagine it was a patient with mild to moderate hearing loss. You know, a prescription hearing aid would be the best option for them, but they weren't ready for it for whatever reason. Let's imagine. And I want you to think to yourself, would you rather that that patient walk out with Sony OTC or nothing?

We want them to walk out with OTC from you. Because if they don't get Sony OTC from you and they leave that appointment with nothing, it's very possible that they could go home, look online and order themselves a solution without your help or support. And what we want is for you to be involved in that journey. So like I mentioned before, when they're ready to evolve that journey, perhaps your prescription hearing aid, you're there for their needs and their support. And lastly, superior clinical care.

When it comes to superior clinical care, that means providing solutions for everyone. Staying informed about what's new, being on the cutting edge of offering what's out there. And if you are a practice that provides that information, perhaps the offering of that product, whatever the new and improved and growing thing is, that is going to put you above who's around you, right? Someone notices the

difference of a professional that is well versed in everything that's out there, even if it's not the first thing that they recommend, compared to a practice that only sticks to what it's know what it knows and doesn't grow and expand that knowledge, and offering a quick call out for you here that we have tons of resources when it comes to counseling and talk tracks and tools for your office. If you want things available to help educate your patients and help educate yourself about how to have these conversations, please let us know.

We have so many resources for this, for you to be successful. We also have lots of marketing solutions. We find that the providers that are most successful with our products and OTC as a whole, have something in their office that references OTC, if nothing else, to start the conversation. That they are that trusted source of information doesn't always end in an offering of OTC, but does ensure that someone who walks in the office knows what they offer and that they're ready to talk about it.

So for some key takeaways today, the call outs here are that the OTC market is growing and people are buying OTC products and we want you as providers to continue to be a part of that growth and evolution. As this market continues to expand, Sony offers extensive OTC portfolio and most newly, including our new CRec 20 and WSA is here to help you build success with OTC for your patients and practice. And I mentioned this earlier, but if you are excited about this but you have some questions about how could the support work for my practice or what materials would I really need in my office, please reach out to us. We have lots of conversations with hearing care providers frequently and no provider is doing it exactly the same way. But the providers who find the right way to fit it in their practice are the ones who are most successful in expanding this option for their patients.

If you want to learn more, we have other audiology online courses and again, here's this email for you to contact us directly.

I really appreciate your time today. I hope that this conversation has helped build your confidence when it comes to what's happening in the OTC market. And specifically what does Sony offer in the OTC market? You can expect Sony and WSA to continue to be a leader in education about OTC product and market because we want to make sure that you as hearing care professionals, stay informed so that's happening and that you can be the experts on all things hearing healthcare, including OTC solutions for your patients. Thank you so much for your time.

Hope you have a great rest of your day.