

Field Study News

June 2016

The Phonak rechargeable hearing solution

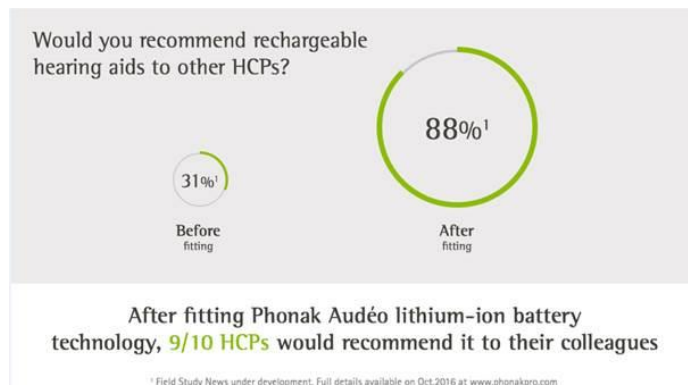
Introduction

Rechargeable technology has become part of everyday life and it is used in many electronic devices because of its convenience and reliability. While rechargeable hearing aids have been available for many years, these solutions have had several disadvantages including insufficient battery life time and long charging times. This has resulted in weak market penetration to date. The introduction of a Phonak Receiver-In-the Canal (RIC) rechargeable hearing aid featuring a Lithium-ion battery is the first of its kind to provide 24 hours of hearing with one simple charge including 80 minutes of media streaming. In addition, it is the quickest charging (a depleted battery being charged in 3 hours) and longest lasting rechargeable hearing aid.

A key aspect during the development of the product was to ensure hassle-free handling. This solution was designed to simplify life and free clients from the inconvenience of disposable batteries that are small and difficult to handle. By integrating the battery into the housing, the need for a battery door has been eliminated. In addition, the push button with an LED indicator light allows clients to the status of the battery within the hearing aid.

A pre-launch field trial was conducted to investigate satisfaction with battery life and charging time, handling and ease-of-use, and finally the design of the rechargeable hearing aids and charger. Initial results show that perceptions have changed remarkably. After participating and gaining more clinical experience with Phonak rechargeable hearing aids, 88% of hearing care professionals (HCPs) stated that they would recommend a Phonak rechargeable hearing aid to their colleagues, compared to only 31% of HCPs who

had previous experience with other rechargeable hearing solutions available.



Methodology

The purpose of the pre-launch field trial was to investigate and further substantiate the battery life claim, satisfaction with the charging time, satisfaction with the battery handling and the design of the Phonak rechargeable hearing aids and chargers.

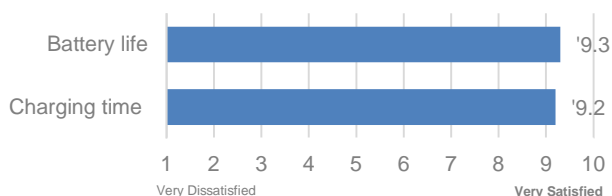
The four month on-going field trial being conducted in France and the United States, included 45 hearing aid businesses and over 700 hearing aids over a period of 12 weeks. Participating HCPs completed three online surveys during this period. The first was conducted before fitting and selling the hearing aids. The second, followed five weeks thereafter, with the third taking place at the end of the field trial. During this period, HCPs offered clients an option to purchase the new Phonak rechargeable solution

(available in the premium level only). Clients who bought this technology were provided with a questionnaire to fill out one week post fitting and again 11 weeks thereafter. This paper shows results for the first two HCP surveys from France and United States, and the first questionnaire from the hearing aid users after a one week trial for France only. Final HCP and hearing aid user survey data from the United States was not available at the time of this report, and will be included in a future publication¹.

Results

An important benchmark for the hearing aid market in terms of rechargeable technology is that it should last 24 hours* with a quick charging time. It was imperative that the Phonak rechargeable solution would last a full day and be quick to charge. The results showed self-reported wear-time of hearing aids was on average 12 hours per day, with a maximum of 18 hours. With Phonak wireless accessories there was a broad range of usage times spanning from 0 to 5 hours per day, with an average of 1.6 hours usage time that importantly did not impact the battery life of the hearing aids.

In fact, 9 out of 10 clients reported being satisfied with battery life and the quick charging time and this remained constant over the course of the trial. Even hearing aid users who used wireless accessories up to 5 hours a day, reported an impressive satisfaction rating of 88%. HCPs reported they were very confident that the battery life would meet the usage needs of their clients. These results indicate that satisfaction with battery life was one of the contributing factors for the rising recommendation rate across HCPs.

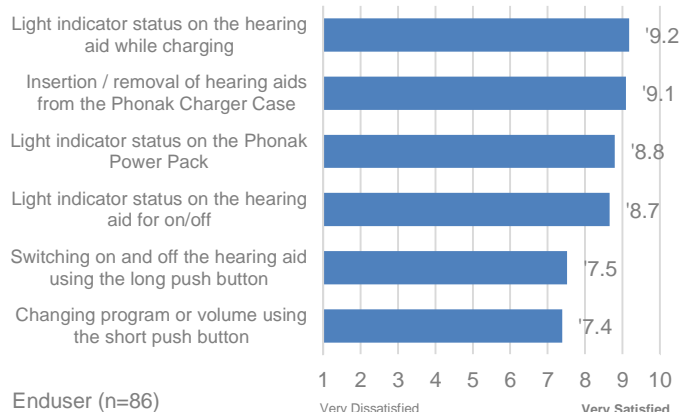


End user responses to the questions regarding satisfaction using a 10 point scale

Enduser (n=82)

When asked about satisfaction with the handling of the hearing aids, the results of the questionnaire showed that the majority of experienced users reported that the Phonak rechargeable hearing aids are easier to use than previous non-rechargeable hearing aids. The questionnaire also collected data regarding satisfaction with the following: light indicator status on the hearing aid while charging;

insertion/removal of hearing aids from charger case; light indicator status on the power pack and hearing aids. Results are shown below and demonstrate a high level of satisfaction.



The integration of the Lithium-ion battery has resulted in a compact RIC hearing aid that is slightly longer than the equivalent 312 size disposable battery model .



When asked about their satisfaction with the design of the hearing aids and chargers, experienced hearing aid users stated that the significant advantages of the rechargeable technology outweigh any size differences they may initially observed compared to other hearing aids they have had experience with. The results also showed high satisfaction with the design of the chargers, with the Phonak Charger Case being a clear favorite as it also offers an power pack option for charging on the go.



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Conclusion

These results provide further evidence that complement internal findings during validation. They show the numerous advantages that Phonak rechargeable hearing aids offer including satisfaction with battery life and charging time, handling, design and a high level of trust amongst HCPs in their willingness to recommend this technology to their colleagues. The success of this pre-launch has shown the numerous benefits of a field trial to obtain insights from HCPs and hearing aid users when introducing an innovative solution such as rechargeable hearing aids.

References

1 Field Study News: The Phonak rechargeable hearing solution Part 2; under development, Oct 2016 (anticipated availability). Comparing objective and subjective outcomes of automatic classification systems across manufacturers.

* Expected results when fully charged, and up to 80 minutes wireless streaming time. Please refer to www.phonakpro.com/evidence