PCAST Aging and Technology Study
Full Working Group

Co-chairs

Christine Cassel,** National Quality Forum
Ed Penhoet,** Alta Partners

Working Group Members

Rosina Bierbaum,** University of Michigan
Jo Ivey Boufford, New York Academy of Medicine
Sara Czaja, University of Miami
David Dring, Selfhelp
S. James Gates, Jr,** University of Maryland, College Park
Susan Graham,** University of California, Berkeley
Thomas Kamber, Older Adults Technology Services
Jason Karlawish, University of Pennsylvania
Art Kramer, University of Illinois

David Lindeman, CITRIS
Chad Mirkin,** Northwestern University
Craig Mundie,** Mundie & Associates
Beth Mynatt, Georgia Tech
William Press,** University of Texas at Austin
Maxine Savitz,** Honeywell (retired)
Charlotte Yeh, AARP

**Denotes PCAST member

Staff

Marjory Blumenthal, Executive Director, PCAST
Ashley Predith, Assistant Executive Director, PCAST

Diane Pankevich, AAAS Fellow, PCAST
Jennifer Michael, Program Support Specialist, PCAST

Science Writer

Robert Saunders, National Quality Forum

President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology
Urgent Need to Improve Hearing

- Major health and social problem
- Growing importance with aging population
- Few adults with hearing loss use hearing aids (~15-30%)
Barriers to Wider Use of Hearing Technologies

- Cost of technology (~$2400 per hearing aid)
- Complexity of access
- Social stigma and limited consumer awareness
- Lack of engagement by health providers
Problem Ripe for Change

- IOM/NAM recently initiated major study.

- PCAST believes a few key Federal actions now could give momentum to needed changes.
Goals of Hearing Report

- Reduce cost to consumers
- Increase the number of people who use technology
- Stimulate innovation and technology development
Hearing Challenge: Cost

• Unlike other electronics, technical advances have not reduced cost.

• Technology itself is not that costly, with several groups selling hearing aids at lower cost (e.g., VA, Costco)

• Consumer electronics solutions (e.g., PSAPs) available at lower cost
Hearing Challenge: Consumer Shopping

- Need to allow consumers to shop for best value
- Make internet shopping more accessible
- Allow new entrants into market more easily
Is Medical Evaluation Always Necessary?

• Small risk of unusual medical conditions, while tens of millions have untreated hearing loss.

• Opportunity to increase access to basic technology for mild to moderate hearing loss, like reading glasses.

• Continue to encourage people with severe hearing loss to see professional.
Path forward

- PCAST analysis finds a few key changes in Federal regulations could accelerate needed changes in access to effective hearing technology.
- Open up the market to lower cost and promote innovation.
- Allow consumer-driven solutions where medical risk is very low.
- Reduce stigma and dramatically improve function.