£2.7 billion cost of tinnitus to the UK

Friday 29 September, 2017

A British Tinnitus Association funded team show NHS provisions for tinnitus are cost-effective against the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) cost-effectiveness threshold.

- **Study shows average cost of tinnitus treatment per patient per year is £717, equating to an NHS healthcare bill of £750 million per year**
- **1.05 million GP consultations for tinnitus each year**
- **The cost to society of tinnitus in the UK is £2.7 billion per year**
- **The most cost-effective therapies for tinnitus are delivered within audiology**

The full paper is available on an open-access basis from:
https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-017-2527-2

Paper authors and tinnitus case studies are available for interview.

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A study funded by the British Tinnitus Association into the healthcare cost of tinnitus management in the UK has calculated that the average cost of tinnitus treatment per patient per year is £717, equating to an NHS healthcare bill of £750 million per year.

The study – a collaborative effort between the British Tinnitus Association, Optimity Advisors and an advisory group comprising of tinnitus experts with backgrounds in audiology, ENT, research and general practice, calculated that over 1.05 million GP consultations for tinnitus take place each year, and that the condition costs society £2.7 billion per year.

The team mapped out the clinical pathways and treatment options used by people who seek help for their tinnitus. To generate an overall average NHS treatment cost and estimate cost-effectiveness, costs and probabilities of a patient receiving a particular treatment, and benefiting from it, were estimated using evidence from expert opinion, research literature, a patient survey, and national statistics.

David Stockdale, Chief Executive of the British Tinnitus Association and leader of the study said:

“With over 6 million people living with tinnitus in the United Kingdom, and the prevalence of bothersome tinnitus increasing, there was a pressing need to examine the costs of tinnitus care in the UK and to provide a bench mark for the economic evaluation of new therapies or modified pathways.”

“Although over 6 million people in the UK have tinnitus, there is no standard treatment pathway for tinnitus patients within the NHS. Possible therapies include education and reassurance, cognitive behavioural therapies, sound enrichment or amplification of external sound via hearing aids. However, the effectiveness of most therapies is somewhat controversial. As health services come under increasing pressure to use limited resources more effectively, there is an increasing need to demonstrate the value of tinnitus therapies, and how this value can be enhanced.”

“The objective of this project was to map out existing clinical practice, estimate the NHS costs associated with the approaches used, and to obtain initial estimates of cost-effectiveness. With an average treatment cost of £717 per patient per year, and an average cost of £10,600 per Quality Adjusted Life Year (QALY) gained across all pathways, NHS provisions for tinnitus are cost-effective against the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) cost-effectiveness threshold.”

“The BTA is highlighting this study in the hope and expectation that healthcare purchasers in the UK will heed this work and improve provision of tinnitus services.”

“An economic evaluation of the healthcare cost of tinnitus management in the UK” is published in *BMC Health Services Research* DOI: 10.1186/s12913-017-2527-2

- **Ends -**

Editors Notes

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About the British Tinnitus Association

The British Tinnitus Association (BTA) is an independent charity which supports thousands of people who experience tinnitus and advises medical professionals from across the world.

The BTA is the primary source of support and information for people with tinnitus in the UK, facilitating an improved quality of life. They aim to encourage prevention through its educational programme and to seek effective treatment for tinnitus through a medical research programme.

The support the BTA offers to 335,000 people per year who are affected by tinnitus is reliant upon the generous donations of their supporters and fundraisers. They receive no government support and need to raise half a million pounds each year to continue their UK wide support.

The experienced team at the BTA understands the impact that tinnitus can have on the lives of those who experience tinnitus and those who live with them, so seeks to provide the most appropriate and expert advice and information free of charge – via a confidential freephone helpline on 0800 018 0527 and online at www.tinnitus.org.uk. The BTA can also post printed and audio information and advice.

Visit the BTA's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BritishTinnitusAssociation and follow the BTA on Twitter at www.twitter.com/BritishTinnitus

About tinnitus

Not an illness or disease, tinnitus is a term that describes the sensation of hearing a noise in the absence of an external sound. The noise can have virtually any quality. Ringing, whistling, and buzzing are common, but more complex sounds may also be reported. Troublesome tinnitus can be very distressing for the affected individual, and issues may arise with sleep, concentration and mood. However, in many cases, subtle changes in people's environment can address these issues, and improve quality of life.

For more information

Nic Wray, Communications Manager

nic@tinnitus.org.uk

0114 250 9933

Skype: nicwray20

British Tinnitus Association

Ground Floor, Unit 5 Acorn Business Park

Woodseats Close

Sheffield

S8 0TB

Company Contact:

Tinnitus UK

T. 0114 250 9933
E. nic@tinnitus.org.uk
W. https://www.tinnitus.org.uk

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