The programming of CI and HA was often reported to be completed by two different clinicians, frequently at two different centers, with each clinician having no knowledge of the other device’s settings.

No common specific prescriptive formula for programming the HA was used: responses indicated use of the National Acoustics Laboratory (NAL) method, the Desired Sensation Level (DSL) method, Manufacturer recommendations, Do not reprogram or “own” methods, including loudness balancing and gain adjustment.

The majority of respondents indicated using subjective feedback from the user to refit both CI and HA.

Some respondents reported the use of real-ear measurements and/or test box verification measures when programming the HA.

Overall, more bilateral and bimodal wearers were reported in large centers versus small centers.

CONCLUSIONS

Although a growing number of CI recipients choose to wear a HA on the contralateral ear, there is inconsistency in the current clinical approach to bimodal programming: CI and HA fittings are often completed by two different clinicians in different places, there is no standard fitting guideline applied to consistently fit both devices, and verification measures are not applied consistently.

Current literature on bimodal programming reports minimal or inconsistent information about how to fit the HA of bimodal users.

This survey highlights the need for more structured clinical recommendations and programming approaches for bimodal users.

Figure 1. Reported clinician completing HA programming for bimodal users. (Aud=audiologist)

Figure 2. Method used to reprogram HA after CI

In May 2016, Advanced Bionics (AB) and Phonak introduced the first integrated hearing solution for bimodal listeners. The Naida™ Link hearing aid offers full-bandwidth bidirectional audio streaming with the Naida CI Q70 and Q90 sound processors. A new Target prescriptive fitting formula, Adaptive Phonak Digital Bimodal (APDB), optimizes the hearing aid’s frequency response and aligns loudness growth functions and automatic gain control (AGC) characteristics between the Naida Link and Naida CI processor.

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