Sir,

In recent years, the open fit hearing aids have been used widely as they are less prominent and more acceptable to patients. The ear mould is replaced with a dome, which manufacturers claim can reduce the occlusive effect compared to a regular ear mould. The receiver-in-the-canal (RIC) aid, which is a type of open fit aid, also gives a more natural sound quality with better signal to noise ratio as the receiver sits close to the eardrum.

However, the dome may detach from these aids and stay in the ear canal as a foreign body. The authors performed an internal audit of 60 consecutive adult patients with aural foreign body in the last year; 20 of them had retained a dome of their open fit hearing aids - both from RIC and behind the ear open fit aids (Figure 1). All these patients were unable to use their hearing aids till the dome was removed by the specialist. Not only that the patients experienced unwanted discomfort but they were at risk of increased morbidity caused by the ear canal trauma with subsequent infection and potential damage to the tympanic membrane caused by instrumentation on attempted removal of dome by the patient or by untrained casualty doctors.¹

It has been reported that the complication rate for removal of aural foreign body is as high as 19.5% by otolaryngologists and 77% by other health care personnel.² The problem appears to affect users throughout the country.³ Hearing aid users have suggested ways to overcome the problem themselves. Some of the methods suggested as a possible solution to the problem, for example, using the hearing aid in a narrow ear canal without the dome, would appear somewhat unsafe. In this regard the hearing aid users need to be educated about this possible complication and appropriate management.

Currently, there does not appear to be a solution to this problem. The authors hope that by highlighting it, the manufacturers could look into further modification of these aids to prevent the dome slipping off the hearing aid.

REFERENCES


Siew Keh and Muhammad Shakeel
Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, Ninewells Hospital, University of Dundee, Dundee, UK.
Correspondence: Dr. Muhammad Shakeel, Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, Ward 26, Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, UK DD1 9SY.
E-mail: drshakeel@doctors.org.uk

Received: January 27, 2014; Accepted: April 05, 2014.