

# Organisational Developments:

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## From Standards to Support: Tinnitus Care in a Changing World

### **Advancing Research and Conceptual Frameworks in Tinnitus** *(updates from AAA)*

In the United States, 2025 saw renewed emphasis on consolidating tinnitus research across disciplines. The American Academy of Audiology's Academy Research Conference (ARC) 2025, held virtually in October, brought together expertise from audiology, medicine, and neuroscience to examine tinnitus as a multifactorial condition requiring integrated diagnostic and management approaches. Presentations addressed epidemiological risk factors, somatosensory tinnitus, sound tolerance conditions, behavioural neuroscience principles for sound therapy, and emerging therapeutic strategies. Increasing attention was paid to central sensitisation, mechanisms related to migraine, and neuroimaging findings linking tinnitus severity with co-occurring conditions. Collectively, the conference reinforced the need for clinically meaningful translation of research into practice and highlighted tinnitus as an ongoing research priority supported by NIH/NIDCD funding.

*“THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF AUDIOLOGY HIGHLIGHTED TINNITUS AS A SUSTAINED RESEARCH PRIORITY AT ARC 2025, EMPHASISING INTEGRATED, MECHANISM-INFORMED APPROACHES TO DIAGNOSIS AND MANAGEMENT.”*

### **Establishing Minimum Standards for Clinical Practice** *(updates from APSO)*

A significant milestone in clinical governance was reached with the publication of the first dedicated U.S. tinnitus standard by the Audiology Practice Standards Organization (APSO). Released in December 2025, S5.1: Evaluation of Patients with Tinnitus defines minimum acceptable practices for the assessment of adult and paediatric patients presenting with tinnitus. Developed through a rigorous multi stage process involving subject-matter experts, public consultation, and legal and ethical review, the standard provides a structured framework for audiological evaluation related to tinnitus.

A complementary standard addressing treatment and management entered public review shortly thereafter, with publication anticipated in early 2026. Although framed as U.S.-specific, these freely available standards are already contributing to wider international discussions on consistency, competence, and accountability in tinnitus care.

*“THE AUDIOLOGY PRACTICE STANDARDS ORGANIZATION (APSO) PUBLISHED THE FIRST U.S. TINNITUS EVALUATION STANDARD, MARKING A MAJOR STEP TOWARD DEFINING MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE CLINICAL PRACTICE.”*

## **Strengthening Professional Confidence and Psychological Awareness**

*(Updates from BSA)*

In the UK, efforts focused on addressing the growing psychological complexity of tinnitus and hyperacusis presentations. The British Society of Audiology Tinnitus and Hyperacusis Special Interest Group (BSA THSIG) delivered a national workshop on tinnitus, hyperacusis, and mental health at the NIHR Nottingham Hearing Biomedical Research Centre. The event responded directly to service evaluations showing that many audiologists feel underprepared when managing cases involving anxiety, depression, or suicidal ideation.

Training emphasised structured assessment, use of validated questionnaires, mental health screening, and supportive clinical communication. Delegates highlighted gaps in pre-registration education, limited access to supervision, and professional isolation. Insights from the workshop are informing a forthcoming THSIG position statement on the role of CBT and other psychological therapies in tinnitus care, alongside plans to develop stronger national peer-support networks.

*“THE BRITISH SOCIETY OF AUDIOLOGY TINNITUS AND HYPERACUSIS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (BSA THSIG) ADDRESSED GAPS IN CLINICAL CONFIDENCE THROUGH NATIONAL TRAINING FOCUSED ON TINNITUS, HYPERACUSIS, AND MENTAL HEALTH.”*

## **Practice-Led Quality and Community-Oriented Care**

*(Updates from AIHHP)*

Independent audiology practices also contributed to advances in tinnitus care through service design and quality-focused initiatives. Across the UK, member practices of the Association of Independent Hearing Healthcare Professionals (AIHHP) continued to prioritise longer consultations, personalised assessment, and counselling-led care combining sound therapy, hearing technology, and wellbeing-focused support.

In partnership with Tinnitus UK, this work contributed to the development of the SoundChoice quality mark, intended to help patients identify providers committed to high standards of tinnitus care and community engagement. The initiative reflects a broader shift toward transparency, patient trust, and alignment with priorities identified by people living with tinnitus.

## **National Leadership, Research Integration, and Global Collaboration**

*(Updates from ENT-UK)*

At an organisational level, ENT UK expanded its strategic involvement in tinnitus through research leadership, partnerships, and patient information. As a strategic partner of the World Tinnitus Congress 2027, to be held in London, ENT UK is helping position UK clinicians and researchers within a global effort to advance understanding, management, and innovation in tinnitus care. Concurrently, ENT UK has been working with Tinnitus UK to update patient information resources, ensuring they reflect current best practice and lived experience.

Research integration was further strengthened through senior ENT leadership secondments within the NIHR, supporting closer collaboration between otology, audiology, and clinical research communities.

## **Strategic Advocacy and Measured Impact** *(Updates from Tinnitus UK)*

The voluntary sector continued to play a central role in shaping the tinnitus landscape. Tinnitus UK launched its new 10-year strategy during 2025, following extensive engagement with people affected by tinnitus and professional stakeholders. The publication of Ringing the Alarm: the tinnitus care crisis highlighted persistent gaps in training, professional confidence, and patient experience. Over the year, Tinnitus UK expanded professional training initiatives, refreshed its organisational membership scheme, and delivered large-scale public support through helplines, online education, and peer networks. Early outcome data suggested improvements in reassurance, understanding, self-management, and clarity about care options among service users, reinforcing the value of coordinated, community-informed approaches.

***“TINNITUS UK HAS RESET ITS DIRECTION THROUGH A PATIENT-LED 10-YEAR STRATEGY THAT COMBINES SYSTEM CHANGE, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND MEASURABLE IMPACT IN SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH TINNITUS.”***