Even when working with a licensed audiologist, choosing the appropriate hearing aid to assist with your hearing difficulties can be a challenging undertaking. Private audiologists have the capability to work with any number of hearing aid manufacturers to best meet their patients’ hearing and lifestyle needs. However, the number of available options can be daunting, particularly to a new hearing aid user. It is crucial to discuss your specific needs and concerns with your audiologist to ensure that the appropriate product is selected.

Most prominent hearing aid manufacturers distribute at least three levels of technology for any specific style of hearing instrument. Simply, that means a hearing aid manufacturer makes any given style of hearing aid available in three technology levels. The complexity of the computer chip within the hearing aids also dictates the price of the instruments. The more features enabled in the hearing aid to assist the listener, the more expensive it will be. The type and degree of hearing loss present is an important consideration to selecting hearing aids, but the environments in which the hearing aids will be used dictates which instruments will be most useful to the patient. Consequently, the patient’s lifestyle is the primary means for identifying the level of technology necessary to best assist the patient.

Entry-level technology assists people who are primarily in quiet situations or conversing with one to two people. This type of environment requires less processing by the hearing aid. Therefore, it is capable of assisting the wearer with only minimal features. Someone who encounters various listening environments each week (e.g., business conference, family dinner, phone calls, etc.) would require hearing aids with more sophistication to optimally attenuate noise and maintain the clarity of speech signals.

Searching for the best value is extremely important to the patient and audiologists alike. Unfortunately, patients often choose the entry technology in an effort to make a financially responsible choice, and the instruments fail to meet their personal listening needs. Hearing aids are an investment in one’s quality of life through improved interaction with the world and communication with their loved ones. Investing in technology that does not meet one’s listening needs (e.g., understanding well in restaurants), will result in less than desired outcomes and a poor investment. Likewise, investing in the highest technology when it is not indicated by one’s lifestyle is also a poor investment as purchased features are not utilized.

Following a diagnostic hearing evaluation, your audiologist should discuss all pertinent information as well as your questions and concerns. It is the audiologist’s responsibility to inform you of the capabilities of each level of technology. It is your duty to openly discuss your needs and expectations. With good teamwork, the best recommendation and intervention can be made. Be wary of a hearing aid dispenser or audiologist who cannot give reason- ing for their hearing aid prescription.