

Tech Reviews

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Tech Reviews is devoted to reviewing online and digital content related to ENT and audiology. Carrying serious and light-hearted reviews, it aims to analyse, inform, share good humour and encourage enhanced online activity and creativity.

If you have browsed a useful ENT or audiology website or used a useful app, please submit your review for consideration for an upcoming Tech Review to francesca@pinpoint-scotland.com

IFTTT.com: a recipe for success with hearing aids?

Technology simplifies our lives: agree or disagree?

For me, the answer to that statement can vary quite a bit throughout any given day. As much as I am now able to communicate, check my bank account, share photos, and find the fastest route to my destination with a few taps on a screen that I carry around in my pocket, it can sometimes feel like all of that convenience is somehow taking up way too much of my time.

I am not planning on giving up my smartphone anytime soon. Still, I am always on the hunt to find ways of streamlining my life with technology. *IFTTT* (If This Then That; *IFTTT.com*) is a free online platform that does just that by allowing users to create 'recipes' to simplify and automate predictable needs. Do you want an email or SMS whenever the local forecast is calling for rain that day? Done! How about setting your phone to mute automatically once you arrive at work? Easy. You can even have it let you know when an item you've been eyeing online drops in price, or text a family member automatically when you are on your way home. The service is compatible with a wide range of popular services and devices (think Facebook, Dropbox, and nearly every major social media platform and smart device / appliance imaginable; full list available at *IFTTT.com*), making the sheer scope of what can be done almost mind-boggling. There is something for just about everyone, no matter how tech-savvy or phobic you may be.

IFTTT is not actually new; it has been around in some capacity since 2011 and

available for use with smartphones since as early as 2013. However, even for those who are already acquainted with the service, there is something new that may be particularly relevant to our readers: functionality with hearing aids.

Oticon *Opn*, the newest offering from the Denmark-based hearing aid manufacturer called Oticon, is the first hearing aid that can connect with the *IFTTT* network. Since its release in June 2016, a number of handy recipes have already become available. For example, using *IFTTT*, users can set their Oticon *Opn* hearing aids to send them (or a caregiver) an email / SMS when the hearing aid batteries are running low, or to automatically change programs when they arrive at a specific destination. The possibilities further expand when the *Opn* hearing aids are used with participating smart home devices. For example, users with *Ring* (a smart video doorbell device) can receive a spoken notification through the hearing aids when the doorbell rings, while users with *Nest Protect* (a smart smoke and carbon monoxide alarm) can receive a notification when an alarm is activated.

The release of Oticon *Opn* and the company's decision to move towards better functionality between smart devices and hearing aids is an exciting and necessary step forward (and a small glimpse into what the future of hearing aid use might look like). For audiologists, it opens up a new branch of potential solutions for patients looking to maximise what they can accomplish with their hearing aids. I, for one, cannot wait to see what recipes will be thought of next! - CF

