BACKGROUND PAPER #2: SELECTED TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES FOR HEARING-IMPAIRED PERSONS

Virginia W. Stern, M.A.
Martha Ross Redden, M.S., Ed.D.

Project on the Handicapped in Science, Office of Opportunities
American Association for the Advancement of Science, Washington, D.C.

OTA Background Papers are documents containing information that supplements formal OTA assessments or is an outcome of internal exploratory planning and evaluation. The material is usually not of immediate policy interest such as is contained in an OTA Report or Technical Memorandum, nor does it present options for Congress to consider.
Foreword

Technology exerts a powerful influence over the lives of everyone, making life easier, more fulfilling, but sometimes more painful and frustrating. This statement is especially true for people with disabilities. The appropriate application of technologies to diminishing the limitations and extending the capabilities of disabled and handicapped persons is one of the prime social and economic goals of public policy.

The Federal Government is deeply involved in programs that affect the development and use of technologies for disabilities. Congress and other institutions have become increasingly interested in questions of how well programs that directly or indirectly develop technologies and support their use have been performing. The Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources requested the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to conduct a study of technologies for handicapped individuals. That study examined the specific factors that affect the research and development, evaluation, diffusion and marketing, delivery, use, and financing of technologies directly related to disabled people. The problems and processes of the development and use of technologies were analyzed in the context of societal allocation of resources and the setting of goals for public policy. The main report of the study Technology and Handicapped People was released in May of 1982.

This case study is background paper #2 of the study. There will be a number of case studies published as part of the assessment, and each will be issued separately. The case studies were commissioned by OTA both to provide information on the specific technologies and to gain lessons that could be applied to the broader policy aspects of technology and disability.

Drafts of each case study were reviewed by OTA staff; by members of the advisory panel to the overall assessment, chaired by Dr. Daisy Tagliacozzo; by members of the Health Program Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. Sidney S. Lee; and by other experts in medicine, disability policy, Government, public interest and consumer rights, and rehabilitation engineering. We are grateful for their assistance. However, responsibility for the case studies remains with the authors.

JOHN H. GIBBONS
Director
Advisory Panel on Technology and Handicapped People

Daisy Tagliacozzo, Panel Chair
Department of Sociology, University of Massachusetts, Harbor Campus

Miriam K. Bazelon
Washington, D. C.

Tom Beauchamp
Kennedy Institute—Center for Bioethics
Georgetown University

Monroe Berkowitz
Bureau of Economic Research
Rutgers University

Henrik Blum
University of California, Berkeley

Frank Bowe
Woodmere, N. Y.

Jim Gallagher
Martha Porter Graham Center
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Melvin Glasser
Committee for National Health Insurance

Ralf Hotchkiss
Oakland, Calif.

John Kimberly
Yale School of Organization and Management
Yale University

Robert Leopold
Department of Psychiatry
Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania

LeRoy Levitt
Mount Sinai Hospital

A. Malachi Mixon, III
Invacare Corp.

Jacquelin Perry
Rancho Los Amigos Hospital

Barbara W. Sklar
Mount Zion Hospital

William Stason
Veterans Administration and Harvard School of Public Health

Gregg Vanderheiden
Trace Research and Development Center
University of Wisconsin

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Washington, D.C.
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National Institute of Handicapped Research
Washington, D.C.
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Don R. Warren
Wisconsin Foundation for Applied Technology
Madison, Wis.

OTA Note

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