Risk for NIHL from personal listening devices

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The risk for noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) from using personal listening devices (PLD) such as the Apple iPod® has received considerable popular media attention in recent years. The true risk for NIHL from using a PLD, however, may be much less than purported by the popular media, potentially detracting from other, more significant sources of leisure noise exposure. It is the profession's responsibility to delineate true risk from media hyperbole. This presentation will provide a summary the literature to date documenting risk for NIHL from PLD, and explain results from three studies on PLD use. The first study will report the A-weighted free-field equivalent output levels from several commercially-available .mp3 players and suggested recommendations for limiting risk for NIHL. The second study will explain the influence of background noise on chosen listening level, and why some in-ear earphones actually mitigate risk for NIHL. The third study will provide diagnostic test criteria measures (including positive predictive value) for the question, "if I can hear another person's music from their headphones, does that mean it's too loud?"