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Janice Lintz

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Fellow, Aspen Ideas: Health 2016

Fifteen percent of American adults, about 37.5 million people, report hearing difficulties. Until recently, they had to shell out many thousands of dollars to obtain hearing aids that were not covered by insurance. Janice Lintz's encounter with five former commissioners of the US Food and Drug Administration at Aspen Ideas: Health helped to change that.

Sparked by her daughter's own hearing loss, Lintz was already a fierce advocate for the wider use of accommodative technology in museums, theatres, and urban transit. Learning that the commissioners would be on the Aspen Ideas: Health stage together, she seized her chance to ask each one why the agency didn't test hearing aids rigorously. Their answers helped her understand the regulatory process and spurred her to initiate and champion the sale of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids.

That dedication paid off in 2022, when the FDA finally issued new regulations, which included a cite to Lintz's testimony and now allow millions of people to purchase hearing aids off the shelf at a fraction of the cost of those sold by prescription. "Having these incredible conversations with all these brilliant FDA commissioners helped me understand what I needed to do to affect change," she recalls. "I could never have accomplished what I did but for the knowledge I gained at Aspen Ideas: Health."