

**INBRIEF**

Summarizing the Evidence

# Funding and Access to Assistive Technologies: Electronic Aids to Daily Living

## Key Messages

- There appears to be no consensus on how to define electronic aids to daily living, who should be eligible for them, or how they should be funded. Funding mechanisms and eligibility criteria also vary between jurisdictions.
- Although funding is sometimes available for medical-grade electronic aids to daily living, the cost of comparable mainstream consumer products is usually not covered.
- Most of the identified research studies investigate assistive technology devices in general rather than electronic aids to daily living specifically.
- Adopting user-centred approaches to assessing assistive technology needs – taking each client’s unique preferences, context, and psychosocial factors into account – may make the delivery of assistive technology services more effective.
- Equitable access to electronic aids to daily living could be improved by:
  - increasing awareness among health professionals and their clients about these devices and services
  - providing health professionals with training on how to provide tailored support to clients
  - ensuring that there are opportunities for clients to collaborate with health professionals in selecting assistive technology devices
  - establishing a mechanism by which individual device needs can be reassessed
  - making sure that assistive technology devices are affordable for those who need them
  - improving internet access in rural and remote communities.

## Context

According to 2017 data, 1 in 5 Canadians (or 6.2 million people) aged 15 years and older live with at least 1 disability that limits their daily activities. The majority of these people use 1 or more assistive technologies to help them perform routine tasks and engage in social interaction. Electronic aids to daily living are 1 type of assistive technology that individuals with physical disabilities use for these purposes.

## Technology

Although there is no consensus on how to define electronic aids to daily living, the term can be used to refer to a range of devices that allow individuals with physical impairments to control their home environment, improve their independence and safety, and increase their access to their community from within their homes. Electronic aids to daily living can be single devices that function and are operated on their own or a number of devices that are integrated and controlled through a computer system. Examples include emergency call systems, systems that control the home environment (e.g., lights, thermostat, blinds), systems that control access to and from the home, and technologies that connect the user to the external world (e.g., email, social media, online banking).

## Issue

In Canada and internationally, assistive technologies are paid for in a variety of ways, including through publicly funded programs. To find out how different jurisdictions fund electronic aids to daily living, CADTH conducted an Environmental Scan for information on assistive technology programs. This information can help inform approaches for providing electronic aids to daily living to people with physical disabilities.

## Methods

A limited literature search was conducted of key resources, and titles and abstracts of the retrieved publications were reviewed.

Full-text publications were evaluated for final article selection based on their relevance in addressing the key objectives of the Environmental Scan. To fill knowledge gaps identified by reviewing the literature, targeted consultations were conducted with key Canadian stakeholders. The consultations were guided by questions about funding and other components of electronic aids to daily living programs, such as barriers and facilitators that impact equitable access to assistive technologies.

## Results

CADTH conducted 3 literature searches that, in total, yielded 682 citations. After screening titles and abstracts, 556 citations were excluded and 126 potentially relevant reports from the electronic search were retrieved for full-text review. Additionally, 16 potentially relevant publications were retrieved from the grey literature search. Of these 142 potentially relevant articles, 31 articles met the criteria for inclusion in this review. In November and December 2020, consultations were held with 2 academic researchers and with stakeholders from Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and 1 federal health care plan.

Read more about CADTH and this topic at:  
[cadth.ca/electronic-aids-daily-living](https://cadth.ca/electronic-aids-daily-living)



## Questions or comments about CADTH or this tool?



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CADTH receives funding from Canada's federal, provincial, and territorial governments, with the exception of Quebec.

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