

What Was the Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Tinnitus in North America?

Vinaya Manchaiah; Eldre Beukes , Lamar University, USA & Joy Onozuka;Torryn Brazell, American Tinnitus Association, USA



Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine tinnitus help-seeking behavior, which resources individuals utilized to cope during the COVID-19 pandemic by those with tinnitus and what additional support is desired.

Method

Design: Cross-sectional study design

Participants: 1,522 adults with tinnitus living in North America

Data collection: Data was collected through an online survey distributed by the American Tinnitus Association via email

Data analysis: Free text from open-ended questions was analyzed using the Automated Content Analysis (ACA) and responses to the structured questionnaire were analyzed using non-parametric statistics.

Results

Help-seeking

There was significantly less help-seeking during the pandemic (Fig 1). Those seeking-help were significantly less bothered by their tinnitus

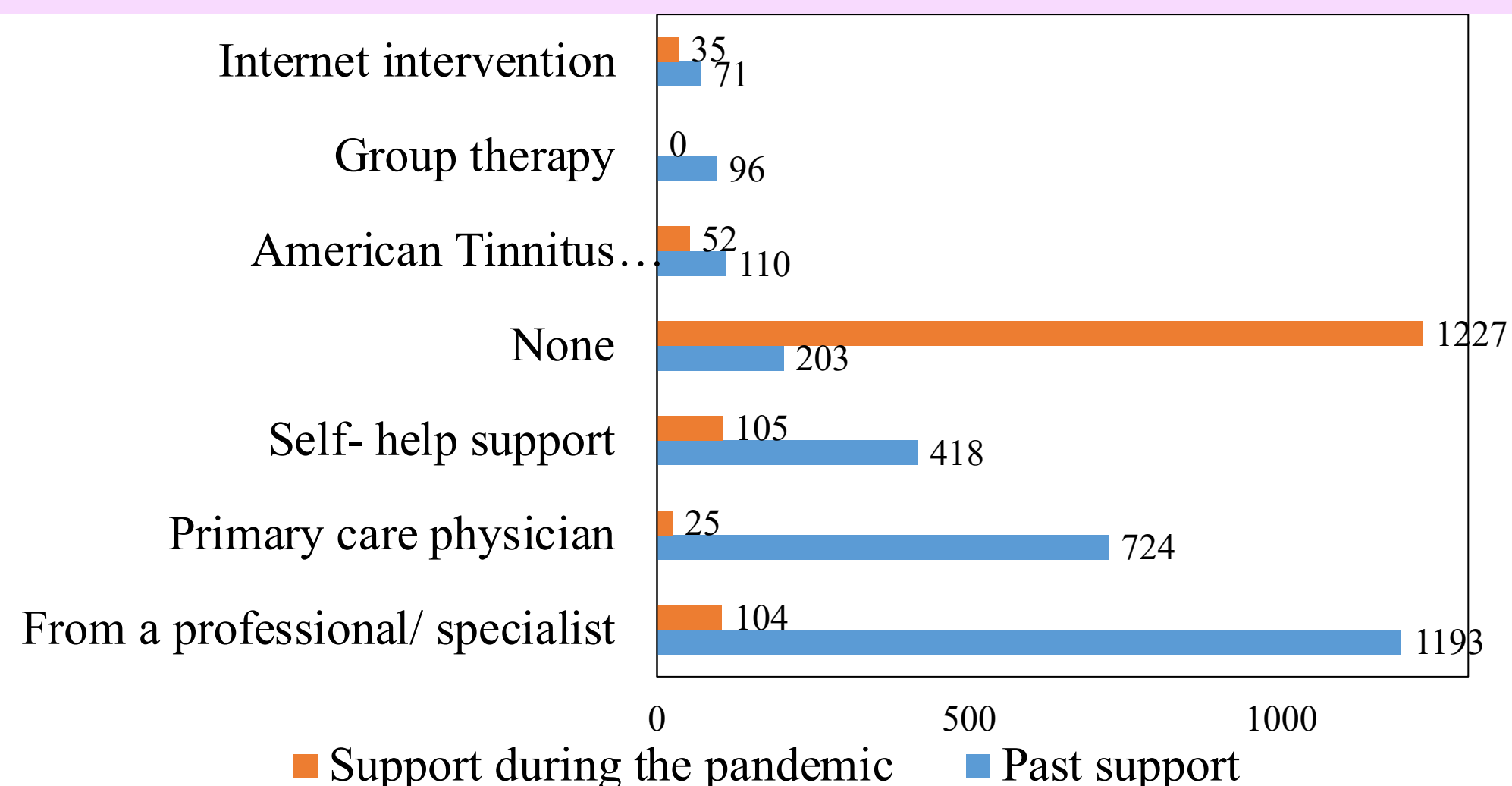
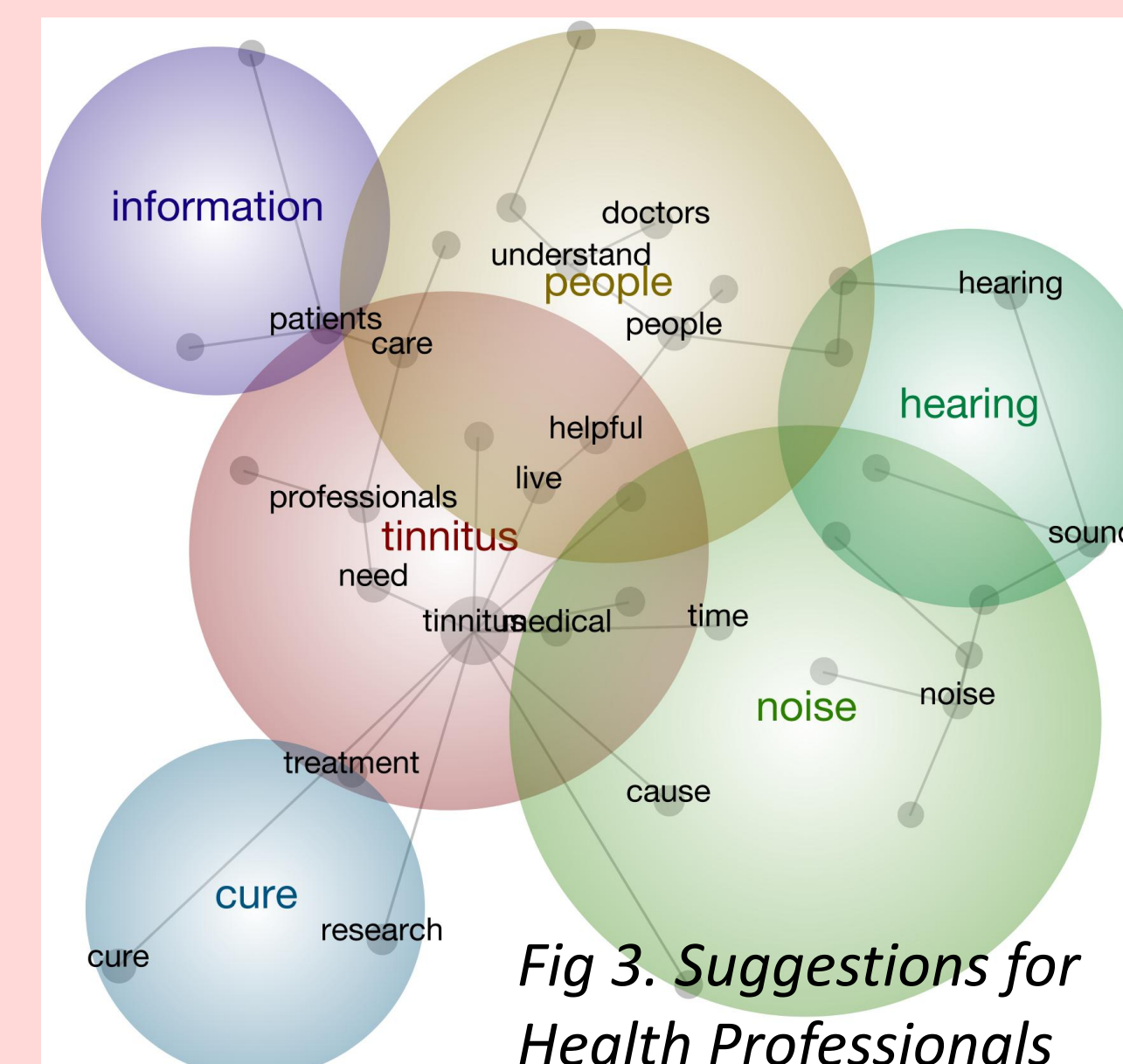
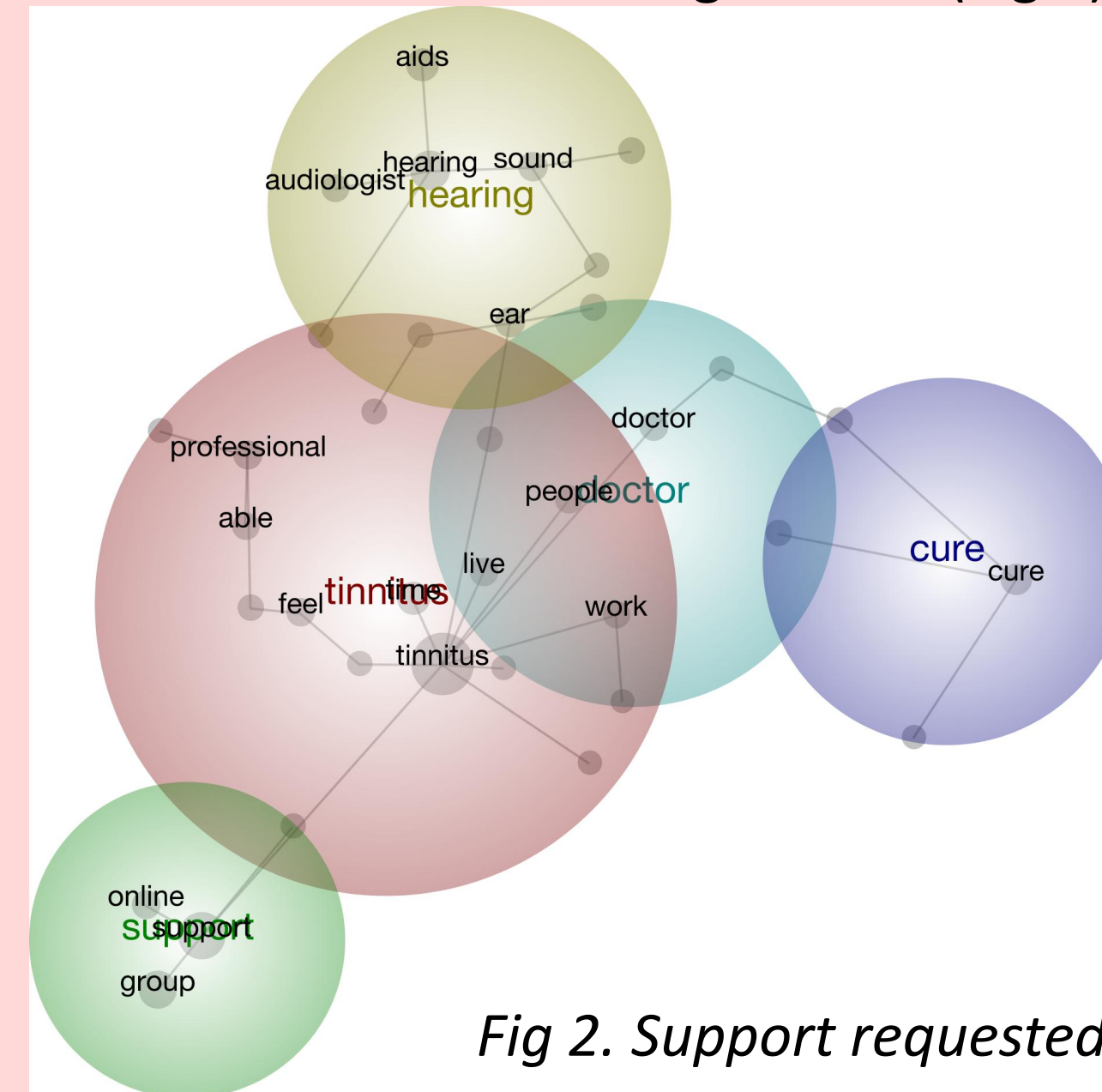


Fig 1. Help-seeking during the pandemic

Additional support requested by those with tinnitus

Support was requested to manage tinnitus and hearing loss, peer-support, finding a cure for tinnitus and access to trained and understanding doctors (Fig 2)



Suggestions for Health Professionals by those with tinnitus

Suggestions for professionals included finding tinnitus cures, personalized support, addressing hearing loss, addressing the tinnitus percept, and the need for more information (Fig 3)

Resources to Cope with the Present Situation

Tinnitus distress was less for those who used these additional resources to cope during the pandemic (Fig 4)

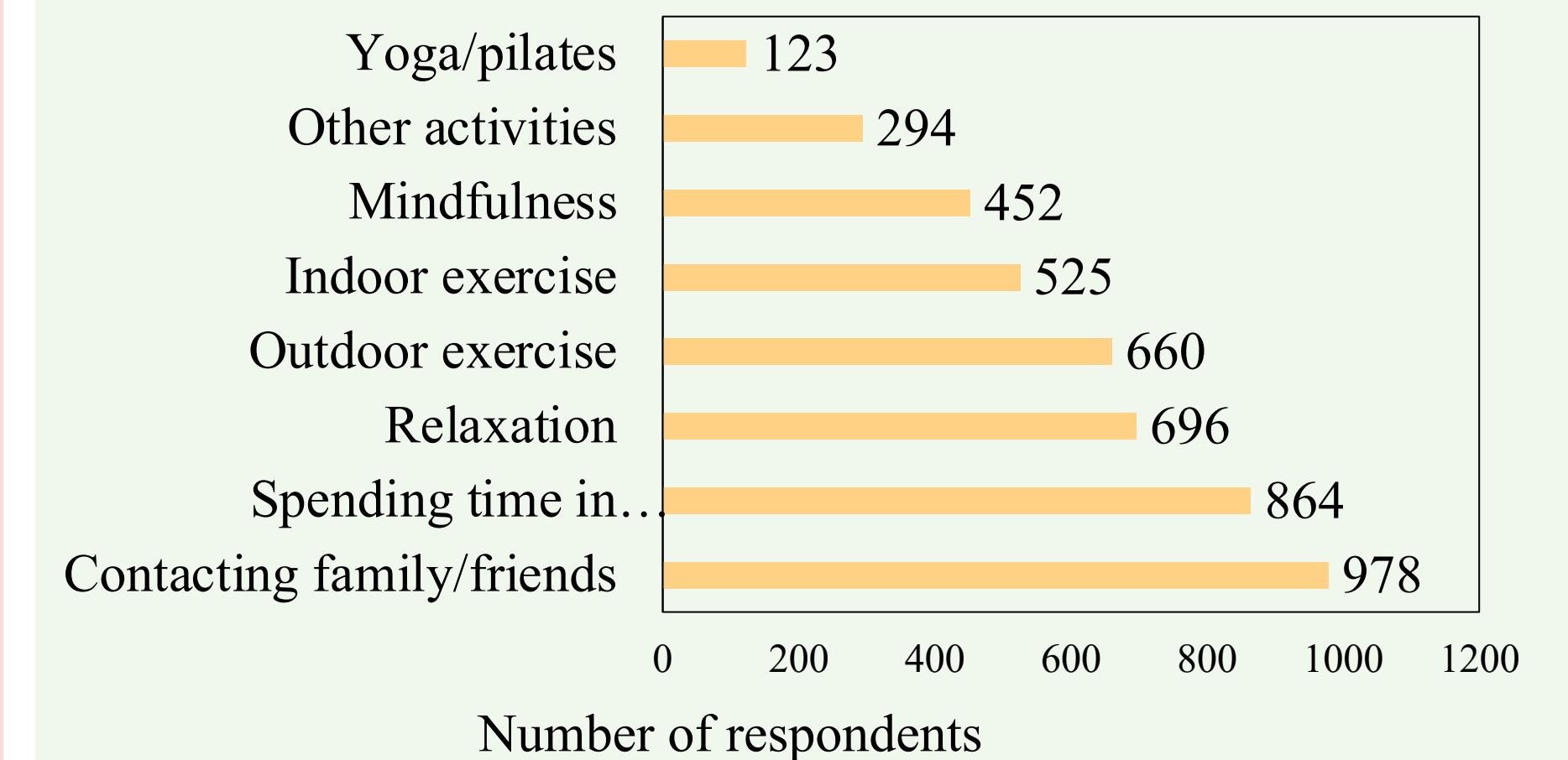


Fig 4. Resources drawn on to cope during the pandemic

Conclusions

These findings provide suggestions on how to better support those with tinnitus at a time when healthcare is undergoing rapid changes. Findings can be used by stakeholders, clinical practitioners, and tinnitus support services to devise ways to work more effectively together to improve access to patient-driven, suitable, accessible, and evidence-based support.

Reference

Beukes, E.W., Onozuka, J., Brazell, T., & Manchaiah, V., (2021). [Coping with tinnitus during the COVID-19 pandemic](#). *American Journal of Audiology*. ISSN 1558-9137. In Press