Timberline Health

Timberline Health, an integrated delivery system serving residents in five counties in eastern Washington, is considering new opportunities to increase community awareness of the organization’s outpatient health services. As the new business development manager of hearing health services, Jack Andrews is responsible for evaluating the feasibility of marketing activities for the hearing service line and must allocate resources to promotional activities that forecast positive return on investment. One option under consideration is to sponsor the health and wellness pavilion at the Spokane County Fair. Research from comparable markets has shown that wellness fairs are not only effective at educating communities about potential risk factors for health problems, including hearing loss, but also increasing consumer awareness of new or existing health services provided by local health organizations. These activities are essential to Timberline Health’s mission within the community. Since little is known about the hearing status of residents in the market area, Jack enlists the services of his organization’s epidemiologist, Dr. Ruth Litchfield, to help him evaluate the potential return on investment for this marketing campaign. Dr. Litchfield incorporates several factors into her analysis. She reviews public health data on hearing loss, occupational and age distribution data for local residents, as well as a query of Timberline Health’s patient databases. Based on this research, she estimates the prevalence of hearing loss in the five-county service area at 18 percent, slightly higher than the national average (NIH, 2010). Jack receives information from the fair’s sales and marketing department to help in his calculations. Specifically, sponsorship consists of an investment of $50,000 for the design and production of promotional materials and rental of pavilion space for the duration of the twelve day fair. Data from the previous three years shows on average 250,000 people attend the fair, of which 1% visit the wellness pavilion and participate in health screening services. If Timberline Health is to offer mobile hearing screening, the organization must invest in new portable audiology equipment. Jack receives a quotation from his supplier and estimates the total investment in new audiometers and audiometric booths at $16,000. Timberline Health will use existing diagnostic equipment to test people who have failed the initial screening (i.e. test positive for hearing loss), so it is unnecessary to invest in additional equipment for the hearing centers. Vendor specifications for the screening and diagnostic equipment are indicated in Table 1.Table 1Vendor equipment specifications Equipment Sensitivity Specificity Portable audiology equipment for free screening90%96%Clinic-based audiology equipment for follow-up diagnostic testing99%99%