



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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September and December by CHHA – North Shore Branch,
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Mountain Ear



Donations

The North Shore Branch of CHHA gratefully acknowledges a \$500.00 donation from the Kiwanis Club of North Vancouver. This donation is allocated to be used to purchase a special microphone with inductive output to help with hearing accessibility at meetings and to demonstrate hearing accessibility in community venues.

President's Message

Our Glass is Full!

You've heard that optimists say the glass is half full while pessimists claim the glass is half empty. I am assuming that they are referring to one's life and how it appears to them. To be sure, life can at times look half full or empty, depending on your perspective.

Let me try one more stab at this saying: The glass is always full! Each one of us has a "full" life. The question is "How is it filled?"

Looking back at this past year, our North Shore Branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA) has been full of very positive contributions to our community. Thanks to our very dedicated volunteers, we have "filled our glass" with a variety of ways to provide our North Shore folk with excellent information and insight around hearing loss issues.

Let me give a toast with our glass. I thoroughly enjoyed and learned from each of our evening meetings at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. Those who attend our daytime *Sound Advice* sessions at West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre provide encouragement and helpful advice on hearing loss. A good number of you are glad you took our *Managing Your Hearing Loss* course. Insight and resources were provided by community speaking engagements and presentations that are sprinkled throughout the year. A few of us are working behind the scenes with city planners and developers to

make our community activities more accessible for the hard of hearing.

That is a full glass, isn't it?

A very merry Christmas to all of you, and best wishes to each of you for the coming new year.

Yours till next time,

F.K. Sprain



CHHA – North Shore Branch November Meeting

The November meeting took place at the Summerhill in North Vancouver on November 24th at 7:00 PM. 30 members and visitors braved the cold evening to come and hear Hugh Hetherington and Rick Waters give a presentation entitled "Let's See How We Hear." The purpose of the presentation was to discuss audiograms and hearing tests and enable the Hard of Hearing person to be better able to communicate with their audiologist or hearing professional. The more a person learns about their hearing loss and what their expectations might be, the more likely they will get a better result with the fitting of hearing aids. The understanding of sound and their audiogram will also help them cope more effectively with their hearing loss and be able to explain their hearing loss to family and friends close to them.

The presentation started out by taking a little look back at the history of hearing tests and the treatment of hearing disorders. Tone audiometry is not a very old science. The first audiometers were developed in the 1920's and 30's, but didn't really play an important role in those early days. The hearing aids of the time were not very sophisticated amplifiers and unlike modern hearing aids had very little room for adaptation to individual hearing losses. Hearing "professionals" of the time relied mainly on tuning forks and even the tick of a pocket watch to test hearing. Speech audiometry was also used with pho-



nograph records to test word recognition and also for hearing loss screening. Hugh demonstrated a small device called the Galton Whistle that was invented in the late 1800's to test for high frequency hearing loss. He also explained how vibrating devices were used early in the 20th century to attempt to cure some types of conductive hearing loss.

In explaining amplification, Rick used the analogy of a radio with its tone controls and also the graphic equalizer, commonly used on modern hi-fi stereo systems. In explaining pitch or frequency, he showed charts of the various speech sounds and musical instruments, and where they fitted in the frequency spectrum. This was then compared against a typical age related audiogram to show what the person could and couldn't hear with this particular hearing loss. He went through a list of various environmental sounds and explained where they fitted on the loudness (dB) scale.

It was explained that an audiogram was a picture of your hearing. It was constructed by the audiologist using an audiometer with earphones. The resulting graph pinpoints your threshold of hearing at various frequencies, usually between 250 Hz and 8000 Hz.

When represented graphically, the sounds which fall above the line are inaudible and the sounds which fall below the line are audible, at least to some extent depending upon the degree of hearing loss. Degrees of hearing loss were also explained as to where certain decibel levels fell into ranges depicted as: Normal, Mild, Moderate, Severe and Profound.

Noise was also discussed and how it affects the ability to hear in both hearing and Hard of Hearing persons. The sound we want to hear is called the signal. The rest is noise.

In summing up, Rick made the following points:

- Generally speaking the hearing aid cannot entirely fix the noise problem.
- Your audiologist needs to know more than what is shown in your audiogram.
- Two way communication with your audiologist can yield a better hearing aid fitting, and,
- You've got legs as well as ears get away from the noise.

As to ears and brains:

- We've got both.
- The brain can learn to "tune out" the noise.
- It takes time for the brain to relearn how to do this.
- Practice wearing your new hearing aid(s), first in quiet surroundings, then gradually in more noisy areas.

As a final look at audiograms:

- It is your audiogram, ask your audiologist for a copy. Your audiologist should be prepared to provide you with this.
- Understanding your audiogram can help you cope better with your hearing loss.
- You can share it with those close to you to help them understand better how you hear.
- It can help you communicate with your audiologist, and this will allow your audiologist better help you.

Presentation by Dr. Jeff Small at September Members' Meeting and A.G.M. Sept. 22, 2003

By Andrea Gauthier

Jeff Small, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at the School of Audiology and Speech Sciences in the Faculty of Medicine at UBC, was the guest speaker at our September 22nd members' meeting.

It's always comforting and reassuring to hear Jeff Small speak because he understands so well the challenges that people with hearing loss are facing on a daily basis. Isn't it nice to be understood!

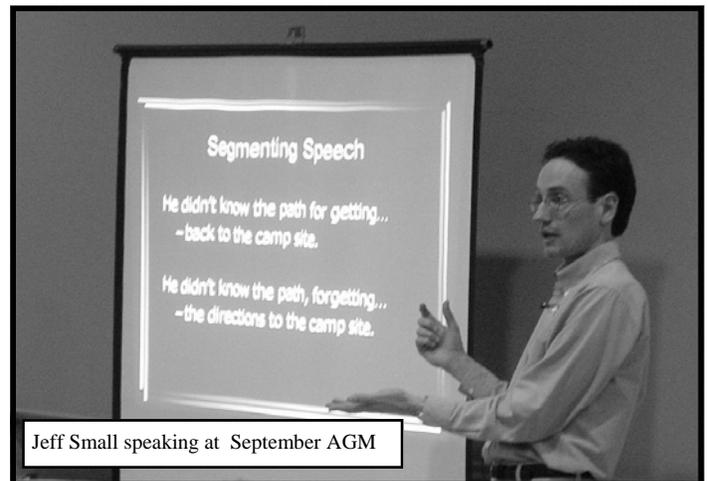
Dr. Small's training is in applied linguistics. His work includes the study of the effects of aging and dementia on language comprehension. He loves language, "a very complex system.." He spoke to us about the demands and resources in processing speech. "I'm not thinking slower, I'm thinking more."

The demands in understanding spoken language fall into two groups: Linguistic, dealing with language, and cognitive, dealing with memory and attention. The demands in understanding spoken language can be either internal or external. The resources in proc-

essing speech, as well, can be internal or external.

The demands take energy. The resources are something that can be turned to for support or help, a supply that can be turned to when needed.

Dr. Small went into great detail as to how these processes work based on the latest research and related his explanations to concrete examples which helped in understanding a very complex situation.



The presentation was so full of information, it would be impossible to pass it on here but perhaps the most important piece was about the importance of reading, which helps in creating and strengthening connections between levels of speech processing and the reminder that the brain is capable of forming new connections even as it is aging.

Thank you, Jeff, for your generosity in giving of your time and expertise to us.

CHHA – BC Annual Conference & AGM Ramada Inn & Conference Centre Abbotsford, B.C. October 3-4, 2003

The Annual CHHA – BC Conference and Annual General Meeting was held in Abbotsford this year. Once again it was a wonderfully informative and entertaining event with many presenters taking part. There were also the usual industry display tables and the silent auction of donated goods.

The hotel made special efforts to be hearing friendly, and I am sure that by holding the conference there they were able to learn a lot about catering to hard of hearing patrons. I first noticed this

when checking in as there was a clearly marked counter loop available at the check-in desk. By switching on my telecoils, I was able to hear the clerk clearly and was not bothered by the background noise.



Mary McLennan & Floyd Belsham – BC Conference 50/50 Draw

I wish we could report on all of the sessions in this newsletter, but space permits us to give a full report on one of the

sessions. Other reports I am sure will be reported in the next issue of CHHA BC's "Loop" newsletter.

Following the welcome and introductions by Maggie Dodd, President of CHHA – BC the attendees were able to attend the Friday sessions:

Plenary 1: Dr. Ruth Warick, Ph.D. spoke on the Impact of a hearing loss in school, work and everyday life.

Plenary 2: Grace Shyng, M.Sc., Aud.(C), Head of Audiology at the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing gave a very informative talk entitled "Let's Talk - What would you like to learn from audiologists and what would they like to learn from you."

(See full report on this talk following)

After a "Meet and Greet" session with a no host bar and buffet of munchies and finger food, the audience was entertained for the remainder of the evening with a children's story, a demonstration of Tai Chi by the Taoist Tai Chi Society of Chilliwack, and Square Dancing instruction and demonstrations by Les & Caroll Brekstad.

On Saturday, the following sessions were presented:

Plenary 3: Catherine Kottmeier and Colette M. Du-bois presented a very interesting presentation entitled "Remote captioning services and captioning in general."

The remaining sessions were split into parent sessions and adult sessions:

Parent Session 1: Dr. Jane Hastings, Consulting Psychologist "Hearing Loss and Learning."

Adult Session 1: Colin Cantlie, President, CHHA – National "Self Advocacy: raising awareness daily."

Following a catered lunch, the following afternoon sessions took place:

Parent Session 2: Parents Branch AGM. "Mini-sessions on letter writing, literacy, newborn hearing screening and educating our communities."

Adult Session 2: Dr. Jane Hastings, Consulting Psychologist "Self Image and Self Esteem."

Parent Session 3: Amy Ho & Parent Panel "Learning a Foreign Tongue."

Adult Session 3: CHHA BC Annual General Meeting.

Let's Talk!

What would you like to learn from Audiologists? What would Audiologists like to learn from you!!

Report by: Hugh Hetherington

A talk given at the 2003 CHHA – BC Conference by Grace Shyng, M.Sc. Aud.(c), Head of Audiology, WIDHH.

Grace began her informative presentation by describing Audiology. It is a relatively new field which emerged in the 1950's born out of two professions: the medical field of otolaryngology and the clinical profession of speech-language pathology. She pointed out that hearing loss was observed to be a communication disorder that not only required medical management, but also management from a rehabilitative and therapy perspective.

In describing what an audiologist is she pointed out some of the educational and knowledge requirements needed. These include:

- Masters degree in Audiology
- Knowledge of anatomy/physiology
- Linguistics/Psychology
- Speech, Language and Auditory Development & Disorders
- Tinnitus

- Hearing Conservation

Two approaches to rehabilitation programs can be taken:

Clinician-centred: the professional drives the rehab program and directs the outcome in a predetermined manner.

Client-centred: the client has more control over the outcome of the rehab plan, and is given more opportunity to provide input and direction to the plan.

What should you expect on your first visit to the Audiologist? There should be a case history interview. The audiologist will want to know about your lifestyle. In what situations do you have trouble hearing? What prompted you to seek help with your hearing? This will be followed by a diagnostic assessment that includes recording a pure tone audiogram with the use of an audiometer. There will also be speech audiometry and an evaluation of your current hearing aids. (if any) The results will then be reviewed and recommendations made.

What would the Audiologist like to learn from you?

In taking the case history the audiologist will want to hear the following from you:

- What brought you to the audiologist today?
- What are important factors about your health history?
- Are there specific situations in which you frequently have trouble hearing?
- Are you willing to wear a hearing aid?
- What do you know about hearing loss and hearing aids?
- Do you have any dexterity or vision issues?
- Are you interested in speech reading classes and/or support groups?

In talking about hearing, the terms “hearing impairment” and “hearing handicap” are often referred to. What is the difference between them? Hearing Impairment: this is the measured degree of hearing loss expressed in decibel level and graphically represented on an audiogram. Hearing Handicap: this is the everyday difficulties faced by the hard of hearing person as a result of the hearing impairment. To further elaborate on this, two people can have the same degree of hearing impairment, while having a very different hearing handicap. It is important to think about what your handicap is before proceeding on a

rehabilitation program. It is also important to work with your audiologist to develop realistic goals.

When dealing with children the audiologist would like to know:

- How did you first suspect the hearing loss?
- Are there speech and language development concerns?
- Are there other issues, such as, attention, memory, or behavioural problems?
- Were there problems in the pregnancy?
- Family history?
- Is the child willing to wear hearing aids?
- What kind of support will the child receive from family and friends?
- Are you interested in networking with other families with similar issues?

The rehabilitation plan: What are your audiologist’s recommendations? Make sure the goals developed are realistic. The process will begin short term with successive appointments usually involving the fitting and evaluation of hearing aids. The overall process, however, is long term and lifelong.

Nowadays, most hearing aids, both analogue and digital, are programmable by computer. It is anticipated that analogue hearing aids will be phased out over the next several years. Digital hearing aids provide greater fine tuning and flexibility and you can expect to have a number of appointments during the first three to six months. Make sure you don’t plan to be away during this period. Keep a diary of your difficulties and bring feedback to each appointment. This is important in the interactive approach. If the fitting involves children, ensure that there is communication between school and other health professionals.

The communication between you and your audiologist must be open and free flowing. So, are there such things as stupid questions? Grace said that, yes, there are. But so what?? Who is making you feel stupid?? She pointed out some historically stupid questions to emphasize this point:

- Galileo: Does the moon revolve around the earth and the earth around the sun?
- Franklin: What would happen if I flew a kite into lightning storm Would I get zapped?
- Bell: I said Watson, come hear, I want you! and Watson heard me on the other side of this con-

traption How is that possible?

What are some of the common questions that are asked of audiologists. These are questions that your audiologist should be prepared to answer and some answers may vary from client to client.

- Will my hearing get worse over time?
- Do I need to get two hearing aids?
- Why do hearing aids cost so much?
- Can I get the hearing aid today?
- Can I have the smallest aid?
- Why can't batteries last longer?
- Why do hearing aids break down so much?
- Can I wear my hearing aids while swimming?
- Is there assistance for hearing aids?
- What about help for employment, school, support groups, communication classes?
- Can I have a copy of my audiogram?

There are also "fringe" questions that you shouldn't be afraid to ask. If it's on your mind, don't be afraid to ask it.

Next time you are at your audiologist's office Do:

- Ask questions.
- Ask why you need to do what you have been recommended to do.
- Ask why was this particular aid recommended for you.
- Ask for a copy and an explanation of your audiogram.
- Give input about how your hearing aid is helping or not helping you.
- Ask about other support programs.
- Ask how long the process will take.

Next time at your audiologist's office Don't be afraid to ask anything!!!

Remember:

- Standards of practice improve because clients demand it.
- Standards of hearing aids improve because consumers demand it.
- Standards of programming improve because audiologists demand it.

Grace closed her very informative talk by saying "Now, I'd like to hear from you!!" and took questions from the audience.



2003/2004 Board of Directors for the North Shore Branch

At our Annual General Meeting on September 22, 2003 a new Board of Directors was elected. Pictured above from left to right: Marion Ladkin, Vice President; Rosemary Almond, Treasurer; Marsha Harris, Member-at-Large; Hugh Hetherington, Secretary; Flo Spratt, President; Joan Gouws, Member-at-Large; and Jim Wilson, Member-at-Large.

CHHA – North Shore Branch Presents Our MANAGING YOUR HEARING LOSS COURSE

Learn Strategies to:

- **Speech Read**
- **Cope in Noisy Environments**
- **Reduce Your Stress**
- **Enjoy Conversing Again**

**Next course starting
February 17th to April 13, 2004
Tuesdays from 10:00 AM till 12:00 Noon
West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre**

**For Registration Contact:
Sylvia Lung, Program Coordinator
Telephone: 604-925-7280**

Course Fee \$35.00