



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

Published four times a year on the 15th of March, June, September and December by CHHA – North Shore Branch, 600 West Queens Road, North Vancouver, B.C. V7N 2L3. Tel: 604-926-5222 Fax: 604-925-2286 email: chha_nsb@telus.net Charitable Registration No. BN 89672 3038 RR0001

Editor: Hugh Hetherington

Issue 45 June 2004

Mountain Ear

President's Message

It Takes Time

It is spring again and many of us are spending time in our gardens. We all know that getting the results we want with our plants takes some work and lots of time.



Whether we simply put some seeds in a pot of soil or have a whole backyard of weeding to do, we need to be patient and willing to give our plants what they need to really flourish.

Isn't that like many things in life? Isn't that also like coping with a hearing loss?

To really "flourish" in life, we must give ourselves what we need and be patient with ourselves.

What *do* we need, anyway, to cope with a hearing loss?

Let me name a few important ingredients.

We need energy to tackle the conversations, discussions and short dialogues that occur throughout the day. It is therefore so important that we stay within our boundaries and that we get enough rest.

We need humor, or a lighthearted approach to our disability.

We need to be on guard for the destructive atti-

(Continued on page 6)

Next Meeting Date

Monday June 21, 2004

7:00 PM

Place: The Summerhill

135 West 15th Street

North Vancouver

Challenging Moments in the life of the Hard of Hearing

A humorous look at various situations with ideas

on coping strategies

Presented by members of the North Shore Branch

Meetings are Hearing and Wheel-chair Accessible

Donations

The North Shore Branch acknowledges with thanks, a most generous donation from the Kiwanis Club of West Vancouver. This donation is to be allocated for the purchase of a video projector for our meetings and the many presentations we make in the community. Thank you W. V. Kiwanians.

Ototoxic Drugs

By Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

We call drugs that damage our ears **ototoxic** (OH-toe-TOKS-ick although some people pronounce it AWE-toe-TOKS-ick) drugs. Ototoxic just means ear (oto) poisoning (toxic). These drugs typically either damage the hair cells in the cochlea, the hair cells in the balance (vestibular) system of our inner ears or our auditory nerves. Side effects of ototoxic drugs may include such things as temporary or permanent hearing loss (generally, but not always, at the higher frequencies); deafness; ringing or other noises in our ears (tinnitus); dizziness; vertigo (where the room seems to spin around); and hypersensitivity to sounds (hyperacusis).

I personally feel that the ototoxic properties of drugs are greatly under-reported. For example, what is listed as a rare ototoxic reaction, may in fact, be much more common. This is because many people do not recognize the ototoxic side effects of the drugs they are taking. For example, a bit of hearing loss may easily go unnoticed, especially if it is in the higher frequencies. People may not connect dizzy spells or ringing in their ears to the medications they are taking. Hence such side effects go unreported. We can be certain that the problem is considerably worse than has been reported.

Did you know that, according to one study, 51% of the approved drugs being released today have serious side effects (including ototoxic ones) that **had not been detected** at the time of the drug release to the public?

It is so easy to assume that because ototoxic side effects have not been reported for a given drug that it is safe for our ears. A good quote to remember is, "absence of evidence does not equal evidence of

absence." In other words, just because an ototoxic side effect has not yet been reported for a specific drug does not mean that that drug will never cause ear damage.

Be careful about taking drugs. The existence of side effects is often downplayed. You need to know **all** the side effects of the drugs you are taking, and then decide with your doctor whether you are prepared to accept the risk of those side effects when compared to what benefits the drug is supposed to bring you. Did you know that an estimated one and a half million people in just the USA end up in the hospital each year as a result of the adverse side effects of prescription drugs? Another 100,000 people die each year from such adverse side effects! You do

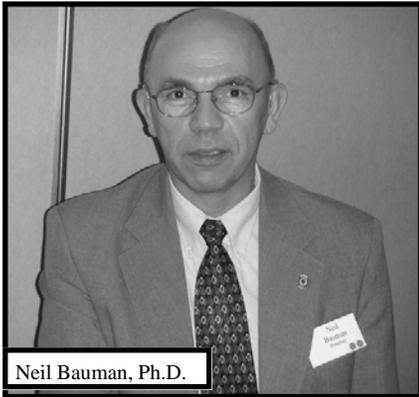
not want to be a part of these statistics!

There are many drugs that are ototoxic to some degree. For example, taking 6 to 8 aspirin a day can cause ringing in your ears (tinnitus) and temporary hearing loss. Some drugs will quickly and permanently damage your ears. You may be left with little or no hearing. This happened to Bonnie after she took an antibiotic to fight a life-threatening infection. Now she cannot

hear any high frequency sounds. Other drugs can have both temporary and permanent effects. While taking chemotherapy, Ruby temporarily lost most of her hearing. After her treatments were over, most of her hearing returned, but she was left with permanent and annoying tinnitus.

Did you know that some drugs cause hearing/balance problems in 25 percent of the people taking them? Antibiotics are particularly notorious for this. One study of hard of hearing children in China revealed that 123 of the 154 children studied had lost their hearing from taking antibiotics. Of these 123 children, 60 of them had hearing problems due to the Aminoglycoside antibiotic Gentamicin. Nor





Neil Bauman, Ph.D.

does this just happen overseas. In one of my hearing loss coping skills classes I was shocked to find that about one-quarter of the people in that class had their hearing damaged from taking oto-

toxic drugs.

Unfortunately, the damage to your ears doesn't always show up while you are still taking the prescribed drug. It may not show up until weeks or even months later. By then it's too late for your doctor to do much about it. Also, be aware that drug damage is cumulative. When you take various drugs from time to time over many years, each different drug may have an almost undetectable deleterious effect on your ears, but eventually you may end up with a noticeable hearing loss.

Always ask your doctor or pharmacist about the possible side effects of any medications (or combinations of medications) you are taking. Have your doctor look these drugs up in their "drug bible" and **show** you. In the USA, doctors use the PDR (Physicians Desk Reference). In Canada they use the CPS (Compendium of Pharmaceuticals and Specialties).

Make up your own mind whether you want to risk the side effects of any drug before you begin to take it. Remember, it's your hearing that is at risk. You are the one who will have to live with the results—not your doctor or pharmacist. Sometimes, like in the two examples I gave above, the side effects of the drugs were less severe than the result of not taking them, namely, certain death. If your options are deaf or death, the choice is easy. However, if it's not a matter of life and death, do your research, and then make an informed decision. Don't let your doctor railroad you.

So which drugs are ototoxic? There are far too many to list in this short article. In fact there are at least 663 drugs that can damage your ears one way or another. Some classes of drugs that are ototoxic include the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

(NSAIDs); many antibiotic drugs, especially the antibacterial drugs like the aminoglycosides; antihistamines such as the H1-blockers; several anti-cancer drugs; cardiovascular drugs including ACE inhibitors, beta-blockers, calcium blockers, etc.; diuretics, especially the loop diuretics; anticonvulsant drugs; antidepressant drugs, especially the tricyclic antidepressants; and many others.

Instead of blindly taking drugs prescribed by your doctor, first become knowledgeable about such drugs. Learn about their ototoxic side effects. Carefully weigh their benefits versus their side effects then make your informed decision. Your ears will thank you for the rest of your life!

Copyright by Neil Bauman. Used by permission.

You may write to the author at:

neil@hearinglosshelp.com. The complete article can be found at:

www.hearinglosshelp.com.

April 19th Meeting Seeing and Hearing Speech

Our regular meeting took place at the Summerhill in North Vancouver on April 19th at 7:00 PM. Our guest speaker was Birgit Cook, M.A., a hearing rehabilitation specialist from Sweden. Birgit Cook was one of the developers of a new interactive computerized speech reading (lip reading) training program available on CD-ROM. The program is called "Seeing and Hearing Speech" and is distributed by Sensimetrics Corporation in the U.S.A.

Seeing and Hearing Speech: Lessons in Lipreading and Listening exploits the multimedia capabilities of personal computers to allow people to train and practice lip-reading at their own pace and at home. This new interactive CD-ROM contains carefully planned lessons that help people combine what they see with what they hear to understand speech better. Seeing and Hearing Speech uses the latest multimedia technology and computer-aided learning techniques to provide extensive, convenient lip reading training on PC or Macintosh computers.

The program is designed to help those with hearing loss increase their ability to understand speech through lessons and practice. The program is broken down into words using the various vowel and conso-

nant sounds and uses several different persons with different facial characteristics to voice the lessons on the screen. The words used to demonstrate the various mouth and lip movements can be viewed as individual words or used in sentences with and without context. The program can be used in two modes: practice and test. In test mode, the program



Birgit Cook & Flo Spratt

keeps a record of your test scores that can be viewed at any time and displayed graphically. The program can be used by multiple persons and will keep track of the scores individually. Other features of the program include the capability to view the words being spoken with and without sound, and optionally with the introduction of various types of background noise which can be adjusted to appropriate levels to simulate different listening situations. Different types of noise that can be introduced in the practice and test sessions include: Party, Street Noise, Machine Noise, Jazz and Calypso. The spoken words can be viewed as spoken or in slow motion to fully see the lip movements. Other features include practice and testing with word stress, intonation, and syllable stress. There is also a section called expansions in which words can be viewed starting individually and working up to longer and longer sentences. A section on everyday communication deals with numbers, names, places, sentence topics, common phrases and related words. An example of related words would be such things as different types of fruits, vegetables, words associated with going to a restaurant, or different parts of the home.

Birgit presented a very in-depth overview of the program during the meeting and answered many

questions from the audience. The program was displayed on our large screen for the audience.

Birgit has donated copies of the program to the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre and arrangements can be made to use the program on the computers there by contacting Sylvia Lung, Program Coordinator. The CD-ROM may also be borrowed for home use.

The CD-ROM may also be purchased from Sensimetrics, Inc. for \$85.00 US. Their website address is: www.seeingspeech.com.

Birgit has also left a few copies of the program with the North Shore Branch for sale at \$115.00 Canadian. To purchase, please contact our Branch at 604-926-5222.

Summer Health Hazards

Summertime provides an excellent opportunity to get out and enjoy our good west coast weather. Summer can hold health risks for everyone, but seniors can be especially vulnerable. While heat waves are not normally a feature of our coastal weather, older people are more affected by heat and this can be exacerbated by illness and even medication.



Many of the medications for high blood pressure and heart disease are diuretics which remove salt and fluid from the body. Add in perspiration and

(Continued on page 5)



Marion Ladkin setting up the booth at Park Royal

Summer Health Hazards

(Continued from page 4)

this can lead to dehydration that can cause discomfort and even damage to body organs. The thirst mechanism in seniors is not as keenly tuned as in younger persons and it is important to ensure adequate fluid intake. Drinking at least six 8 ounce glasses of fluids every day will help to prevent dehydration.

Seniors should be on the lookout for signs of skin cancer, as well. Age is a factor in many cancers and skin cancer is included. Protect yourself from the sun's rays by wearing appropriate clothing and especially a hat if you are out in the sun for extended periods.

Allergies can also be more of a problem in spring and summer. If you suffer from allergies and take medications to combat this, beware that many of these medications can cause drowsiness and will affect your ability to drive a vehicle.

If your summer activities include barbecues or pic-

(Continued on page 6)

Park Royal Health Fair May 4th 2004

Again this year, the North Shore Branch took part in the annual Health Fair at Park Royal. Our thanks to Marion Ladkin who took care of all the organization and planning for the event and to the volunteers who took the time to come down and talk to the many interested persons who stopped by the booth. Helping to look after the booth throughout the day were: Joan Gouws, Flo Spratt, Marsha Harris, Jim Wilson, and Hugh Hetherington. Judging by the many people who stopped by the booth to ask questions or pick up a brochure, there is a strong interest in hearing loss issues, especially among seniors. Those who stopped by were told about our Sound Advice workshop on the first Friday of each month at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre and this resulted in increased attendance at our May 7th meeting. It was also nice to see the many CHHA North Shore Branch members who stopped by the booth to say hello.

Summer Health Hazards

(Continued from page 5)

tics, be sure to pay attention to food handling. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold in order to prevent food poisoning. Keep raw meats separate from cooked foods or foods that will be eaten raw. Make sure you have the number for the local poison center with you so you can get help if needed.

Let's not forget about our hearing also. It is important to protect this at all times. Power lawnmowers and other power tools generate excessive noise levels that can be damaging to your hearing. Always ensure that you wear adequate hearing protection when around these tools. If you are hard of hearing, turning off or removing your hearing aids may not be enough. Use hearing protection, as well.

If you are out on the water, always wear a lifejacket and remember that powerboats can also generate dangerous sound levels. If moving about the city, beware of road construction areas where jack hammers, concrete saws and dump trucks abound. Exposure to high levels of noise in any of these scenarios can produce temporary or even permanent hearing loss.

Taking a little care and observing these precautions will ensure that you have a happy, safe and enjoyable summer.

President's Message

(Continued from page 1)

tudes that crop up so easily. Pulling out the "weeds" of self-pity, fear of making a blunder or anger at others for their insensitivity, is an ongoing task. When these attitudes are dealt with, we have more room for humor and joy in life.

And most of all, we need patience: patience with ourselves and with others. We aren't transformed overnight into coping, joyful people, especially as we come to grips with our hearing loss. And we can't expect our friends and close ones to suddenly be understanding and always able to meet our hearing needs. I believe patience is a key ingredient to coping with one's hearing loss.

Just like gardening. Be patient. And do work at it!

Til next time,

Flo



All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the CHHA – North Shore Branch.

Sound Advice

A monthly series of informal workshops and discussions around issues affecting the hard of hearing.

Presented by:

**The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
North Shore Branch**

The group meets on the first Friday of each month from 10:00 AM to 12 Noon at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre's Learning Studio, 695 21st Street in West Vancouver.

Come and join us and other Hard of Hearing people who get together to share and discuss.

When we meet, we discuss topics and issues dealing with hearing loss.

We look forward to seeing you there. Bring a friend, a family member, they are welcome too.

Subjects to be addressed will include:

Technology; Speech Reading; Behavioural Issues;
Improving Relationships; Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call: 604-926-5222 or Fax: 604-925-2286