



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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Editor: Hugh Hetherington

Issue 81 June 2013

Mountain Ear

Pres Mez

By Mike Hocevar on behalf of the Board.

Despite the unfortunate closing of some branches due to lack of participation in the past year, delegates to the CHHA British Columbia Chapter's AGM on May 11th generated lots of thoughts and ideas for a very strong incoming executive board to make the provincial chapter a relevant support based organization for local branches.

A packed forum of delegates including **Hugh Hetherington**, **Caroline Wickham** and myself offered lots of constructive thoughts in a workshop on the questions of what trends we forecast, and what role CHHA BC must play as we look towards 2020, the end of the present decade.

Some responses included demographic shifts of an aging population as well as an increase in hearing loss in the younger population caused by lifestyle issues such as noise pollution and the damaging effects of listening too loudly to devices like MP3 players and smart phones. These and other changes will mean even more relevance for our organization.

Input from these discussions indicated that CHHA BC's effectiveness can focus on offering various training and resources for branches to be effective.

Further, advocacy by CHHA on issues such as the addressing the high cost of hearing aids and other hearing loss issues needs to increase and be vigorous.

The new board consisting of president **Marilyn Dahl**, vice president **Rodney George**, secretary **Deborah Scott**, treasurer **Sharon Davis**, members-at-large **Kelsie Grazier** and **Karen Matheson** and

June Presentation

Monday, June 17, 2013

7:00 pm at the Summerhill

135 West 15th Street, North Vancouver

Guest Speaker

Dan Paccioretti, M.Sc., Aud(C)

Western FM Sales Manager

Phonak Canada Ltd.

Topic

**New Innovations from
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past president **Nora McKellin** are eager to receive more input to guide them in creating a blueprint for CHHA BC to effectively support current branches and to assist in establishing & re-establishing new branches around BC. We'll look forward to their recommendations as developed over time.

Announced also, was the national 3rd Annual Walk2Hear event to go ahead on Saturday, September 21st at Vancouver's Jericho Park. Walks in other locations are anticipated to take place in Victoria and Kelowna.

The delegates from CHHA North Shore are committed to assisting with all of the above. In the meantime, we'll catch you at the June meeting at the Summerhill for what will be a useful seminar on the latest hearing aid and assistive device technology in our last event before the summer break. And thank you for your strong attendance at the past meetings. Haven't they been very informative!

February presentation

Protecting yourself against frauds and scams

Report by: Mike Hocevar

"If it looks too good to be true, then it is!" was what Sgt. Kevin Bracewell's mother used to tell him. And after 23 years with the RCMP with recent stops in Iraq and Afghanistan along the way since he left the U.K., this has been more than confirmed.. At our February Summerhill presentation Sgt. Bracewell of the North Vancouver RCMP Detachment extended this message to all of us.

He told us that frauds, scams and other associated devious schemes to take your money have been around since biblical times. The reason any of it is successful, says Sgt. Bracewell, is because it is a basic trait of human nature that we are naturally greedy and lazy and like to get a good deal; it's why scams work. The "bad guys" know this and find victims of all ages, and especially target seniors.

To recognize and prevent such incidents happening to you, the talk covered a number of such plays with a focus on identity theft especially with today's com-

puter age. The list includes:

1. The Nigerian money scam. These emails commonly sent from Nigeria with a promise to reward you greatly for assisting in a bank snafu for which, if you cooperate, you must deposit some of your money to an account. Don't do it—it is a fraud.

2. Emails purporting to be from your financial institution directing you to a legitimate looking web page including the letterheads and logos designed to deceive you. These require you to respond with your account and/or pin numbers on the pretense of confirming them or some other false claim. Sgt. Bracewell's advice is that your banks will **never** require you to give your pin number or password by email or over the phone. Banks generally do not use email to contact you regarding financial business.

3. Online dating & marriage sites are often fronts for scamming money through fictional contacts. Many a broken heart has resulted along with monetary losses. Also, be cautious of employment services and ads that want upfront money for access to their sites, which are bogus.

4. Cheque & money order cashing schemes with links, which when attempted, open access to your personal banking information.

5. Housing rental ads on Craigslist and other sites. These typically offer attractive apartments or condos for a very reasonable price—too reasonable in fact. A scammer obtains a suite and then acts as an owner in the ads and attempts to rent out the suite. In doing so, takes in many deposits from victims. After collecting a number of deposits the scammer then disappears. The original legitimate owner gets stuck with a mess and all of the prospective renters are left without their deposit money and, often without accommodation having moved out from their prior place.

6. Computer Lock Scam. A more recent scam that results from opening a malware infected site or link on the internet has a very official looking webpage purporting to be from CSIS or the RCMP. This locks your computer with an advisory that you have viewed content deemed illegal under the criminal code. It goes on to say that this is a warning but to unfreeze your computer you must pay a fee through a PayPal type link on the page. Apparently, even if the fee gets paid the computer doesn't become operational again requiring you to have your computer repaired.

7. Computer technology extends to banking machines and debit card terminals; crooks will try to use skimming devices to record your pin numbers. Always cover the terminal whenever you punch in your pin number to prevent skimming and be aware of your surroundings.

8. Free prize or lottery win email telling you that you have won a prize or lottery. How can you win if you didn't enter? This may just be a way to obtain personal information or money for shipping & handling fees for something that won't be delivered.

9. Overpayment schemes. This is where someone pays you for something you are selling with a cheque or money order for more than the asking price. You are asked to deposit the cheque and return the balance by cash payment or money transfer. The cheque or money order later turns out to be fraudulent and you are out the money for your item as well as the returned cash.

10. "Curbside" plays. These are another group of scams that will involve high pressure, cash-only and immediate to act upon sales. This is where real psychology is used on victims. Some examples are:

A. Door knocking phony donation appeals. A request to sign up for volunteer work will be, upon rejection, politely followed up with a request for a donation.

B. Home repairs. A quote given is often negotiated upwards after acceptance because of extra "discovered problems" which should be fixed. These are false and part of the scam being perpetrated. Note that often a company will offer a better deal if cash is paid—one should always get the quote in writing and a receipt if the work is done. Such arrangements usually mean no taxes are paid to the government, which is illegal. Also, be alert that if you are asked not to share a quote with others for a day or two, or that the cash deal offered for the project is a now or never take it or leave it decision, then the contractor should be dropped immediately.

C. Flea markets and back alley cash deals on goods and clothing are often for stolen goods and should be avoided. Even used cars will be offered for a quick cash sale and may end up being very bad deals with major repairs and upgrades required.

D. Time share presentations can be very tempting with a free trip or gift to start off, then come high pressure sales pitches. Be aware and sure of what you are signing up for.

E. Pyramid schemes, these involve joining

for a fee that is recovered through the recruitment of others. If new people join in and you are entitled to shares of their fees, at some point the organizers of the pyramid pull the plug and everyone is out of their money. "Always remember", says Sgt. Bracewell, "you can't get something for nothing".

He also admonished us to be very careful in oral communication at hotel desks when giving out personal and credit card information. Do be aware of anyone nearby listening to try to determine your name and room number.

Sgt. Bracewell warns that you must be aware and alert to these and more scams, including ones done by telephone. Avoid giving your personal and financial account and pin numbers over the phone unless you know it is a legitimate company. He urges you to call the non-emergency line at your local police detachment anytime to report or get information about scams and frauds.

April presentation

Understanding Dizziness & Balance disorders

Report by Mike Hocesvar.

Many people with hearing loss experience some degree of dizziness and balance problems, so it was most appreciated to have **Jolene Harrington, M.Sc., RAUD** speak on the topic "Understanding Balance and Dizziness Disorders, How Can an Audiologist Help." Jolene is from St. Paul's Hospital's Department of Audiology and is certified in vestibular assessment and management. She provided us with information and advice on this topic. The nice thing is, as Jolene indicated, there are a lot of easy tests to suggest treatments and exercises that will help with balance and dizziness. Balance is determined by the brain processing the signals forwarded by a trio of sources within the body: The inner hearing system – part of which is the vestibular system containing balance sensors; vision – which reports to the brain what external factors are in play; and the nerve and muscle network – especially in the legs. Body movements also factor in and Jolene explained these and their correlation for maintaining optimal balance.

Many effective clinical tests for measuring balance and dizziness levels are available. These include:

1. **GansSOP**, which is Gans Sensory Organization

Performance test with seven conditions, examined.

2. VNG, which is Videonystagmography, the most widely used tests to assess the vestibular system and includes vestibular, balance, dizziness and the water test. Eye, positional and caloric tests are part of this testing area.

3. VEMPs, Vestibular Evoked Myogenic Potentials, which include several tests that cover nerve systems in the three areas aforementioned in the introduction to this article.

4. vHIT, which is Video Head Impulse Test.

Jolene provided details on how these tests work and what the findings mean. She even included a demonstration with a volunteer from the audience for a test on balance and posture control

Following testing, a number of rehab therapies can be prescribed in accordance with the results. Treatments include Canalith Repositioning Maneuvers and Vestibular Rehabilitation Therapy. While some issues can be ameliorated somewhat through the use of prescription drugs, there are easy physical rebalancing exercises that might be proposed by professional physiotherapists. The Asian exercise called Tai Chi is a popular one recommended to those with balance issues. Strategies addressing motion actions that trigger dizziness and vertigo may also be offered. For example, a repositioning type of training to prep the body from a sleep or long rest period can be learned.

It is important for elderly people to be alert to the possibilities of and dangers from falls. St. Paul's Hospital currently offers for those 65 and over who have indeed had a fall, to take a Fall Prevention course. The hospital is developing a specialized clinic in this area also.

Another great resource is the Balance and Dizziness Disorder Society of BC (BADD). They hold regular meetings in the Vancouver area and offer Tai Chi classes as part of their program. Call them at 604-878-8383 for further information. In North Vancouver, Betty Macmillan, the Vice President and Information Coordinator for BADD will be holding support group meetings at the Summerhill on the last Thursday every month (except December) at 2:00 PM. The Summerhill address is 135 West 15th Street in North Vancouver. To sign up contact Betty at 604-770-2131 or email bettymacm@shaw.ca.

From one Life to Another, My Hearing Journey

Editor's note: In the last issue we started a new series excerpting from a blog written by Rick Waters as he was awaiting cochlear implant surgery. As Rick has been very prolific in his writing it is impossible for us to include the full blog in this newsletter. However, in this issue we will continue with some of the highlights. You can read his full blog at: <http://rickwaters69.wordpress.com/going-bionic-a-cochlear-implant>. We jump ahead now to the day that Rick's cochlear implant was switched on.

There are Moments In Every Life

What a day it's been, and it's only 2:41 local time here!

At 9:00 AM, Lynn and I met my daughter, Emily, at the hospital coffee shop, and proceeded to the audiologist's office. After hellos, and a brief recap of how the surgery went, and how I'd managed in the interval since the surgery, we had a brief introduction to the hardware. At that point, the audiologist, Cindy, began the preliminary mapping/programming work. I listened to tones, which ranged up to almost 8,000 Hz, as the audiologist set the comfort levels.

At 10:00, she mentioned that she had been reading my blog, and since my daughter and Lynn were with me, whose voices did I want to hear first??

She did the switch-on, and through the awful electronic noise, I could hear my daughter and Lynn, sounding as though they were computer-generated facsimiles of cartoon voices! But, I could hear them, along with my own weird voice. It did bring tears to my eyes, for sure, but you know they were tears of joy. I was able to talk with Cindy in order to confirm loudness levels, and some further details on using the processor controls, and at 10:25 we took a break.

We walked out into the street, and passed a road construction site, but I could hear the voices of my wife and my daughter. Just a fabulous feeling, fabulous!

Back to the audiologist at 10:45, and she proceeded to work for a while to set the threshold levels, with some further testing. The noise, and cartoonish timbre continued, but suddenly I noticed that I could tell Emily's voice from Lynn's. And then, I couldn't resist: I took out my cell phone and called the government weather service. And I could understand the voice at the other end. Press 1 for service in English; Press 2 for service in French; for the weather forecast, press 1; and so on.

Then, Cindy proceeded to give me some word-and-sentence-recognition tests, covering her mouth so that I could not cheat by lip reading. As near as I can tell, I aced these exercises. All the while, the electronic noise was becoming less prominent, and the voices were "separating" from the background noise.'

After more than one friendly warning from the audiologist to try to keep my expectations in check, we went over the routine for the rest of the week. My job is to keep my hearing aid out of my other ear, leave the CI on as much as possible, and get involved in lots of conversations.

At 12:30, we figured we'd done all we could do for one day, and Lynn had to get back to work anyway. We walked down the street, again through some horrendous downtown noise, but I could clearly hear both of them as we walked along.

Emily and I went to a reasonably noisy restaurant for a light lunch, and she remarked that I was hearing her better than I did when I wore hearing aids. And this was with my hearing aid out, at the direction of the audiologist.

There are days in every life that will never be forgotten, and for me, this one is right up there!

For Whom the Clock Ticks

As I write this, activation day is not yet over. I'm in the so-called quiet sanctuary of my living room, in a house which has been owned by my family since 1948, 65 years I guess. On the mantle, is a wind-up

clock that's been in the family since at least 1910, perhaps longer, no one is really sure, except those who have long since died. Prior to taking up residence in this house, the clock lived at my grandmother's home, at 1617 Tenth Avenue East, in Vancouver. I love the clock, but boy, is that tick-tocking loud.

The clock is really trying to tell me something very simple: this is one noisy world. Turning on the tap gives me cause to jump back quickly. Unwrapping chewing gum creates a fantastic crackling sound. And don't you dare flush the toilet without warning me first, ok! After years of being a gearhead, owning a succession of noisy hobby cars, I'm about to jump on the electric car bandwagon. Anything to get rid of this noise.

Just identifying the source of much of the noise is a major challenge. If I can see the activity that generates the noise, say for example, a concrete delivery truck unloading concrete into a chute, I know what that sound is. But sometimes, I can't see the source of the sound. A good example was the steam generator in an espresso machine today. Whew! total sound blackout for me!!

What's happening, of course, is that for most of my life, and for the last 50 years for sure, I haven't heard these sounds. The rest of you hear them everyday, except that they don't register, because your brain has learned to tune them out. You see, your sense of hearing is your primary safety warning device. The brain is constantly analyzing all the sounds that come in through the auditory system, and evaluating those that you need to hear. For example, while driving in your car, the sound of the tires on the road, the engine, and the wind rushing around the car body are all suppressed, but your brain hears a siren, and tells you to pay attention.

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

For me, that learning process hasn't happened yet. I have to learn what all these new sounds mean, then once they are processed, my brain will, quickly I hope, learn to suppress the sounds that are not necessary for my well-being.

After today, day one of listening with a CI, that learning process cannot come fast enough. Just the sound of the laptop keyboard is quite annoying.

Meantime, for whatever reason, that old clock keeps hammering right into the centre of my consciousness. Almost like there's a little guy in there with a small hammer: Tick-Tock-Tick-Tock-Tick-Tock.

Anything Wrong?

It's been a bit since I last posted. Is something wrong? Have I become disenchanted with my new Bionic Ear. I mean, I was posting twice a day there for a while—what happened?

The answer is that I've been too busy enjoying life. When the phone rings now, I pick it up, unless it's one of those 1-800 numbers. I have found time to sit quietly and listen to Norah Jones singing the lovely songs on one of her early CDs, *Not Too Late*, and I've been listening to the television news, all without any assistive devices. I went out to a local coffee shop with a buddy I've known since university days, and part way through the conversation, we concluded that he was having more trouble hearing me, than I was hearing him!

At my last activation appointment, on Thursday, the audiologist asked me to start wearing my hearing aid in the left ear. So, I put it in, and found that the hearing aid made it harder to hear clearly. She suggested I remove my new processor, and just listen with the hearing aid. Ughhh! Terrible sound compared to the bionic ear. She assured me that soon, that poor over-worked brain of mine would learn to use the information from the left ear, and integrate it with the bionic information, to give me even better auditory information. It's just starting to work that way now, although it often sounds like I'm listening to two things at once.

The "Elmer Fudd" cartoon effect is slowly wearing off, (Be vewy, vewy quiet, I'm hunting wabbits.) People's voices are slowly starting to sound the way I remember them, and male and female voices are now easily distinguished.

Chicken on the barbeque makes a nice quiet sizzling sound, I can hear Lynn when she comes down the stairs for coffee in the morning, and I'm now used to the new sound of the microwave beep, the clock chime, and the sound of rain. When I move, I hear the rustle of my clothes. Plastic bags make an awful din, and I can hear people breathing.

In one sense, my hearing journey has come to an end. I'm so close to where I want to be, that I'm fairly sure that the sound will continue to become more natural as I just go through my life using my sense of hearing, and practicing my listening. But in another, the journey has only just begun. I've so many things I want to hear, starting with the birds, the sound of the ocean waves, and this summer, the sound of a campfire.

One interesting adjustment I have to make is to come to terms with how people's voices really sound. Remember, for the past 50 years or so, I've been listening to those voices with badly damaged cochleas. Most of the treble information in their voices was simply lost. Now, I'm hearing that treble information, and their voices sound different. There are still intonations and speech habits that identify them, though. So, which of the voices is the true voice? And does it really matter?

If you've followed this blog to learn if a cochlear implant is right for you, or someone close to you, I think you're probably equipped with more information than you were before, and the information I've tried to convey here is not technical, or brand comparison information, but information more related to the human experience of hearing as it impacts the quality of life. For me, it's been a very successful journey. I've had fantastic support from my wife, Lynn, and my family and friends. My surgeon, Dr. Brian Westerberg lived up to his superb reputation,

and my audiologist, Cindy Gustin, demonstrated wonderful professional, interpersonal, and communication skills. I could not have asked for better care.

Gotta Love That iPhone

By Hugh Hetherington

Smart Phones seem to be everywhere. You can't walk down the street without observing someone tapping away or talking on his or her smart phone. Here, I am going to talk about the Apple iPhone® because that's the one I happen to own. Actually, I don't really use it much as a cell phone, perhaps making only 2 or 3 phone calls a month. I read somewhere recently that the iPhone is the Swiss Army Knife of the cell phone. On it you can have applications (called Apps) for just about anything you can think of. They can also be set up to help with different accessibility issues, such as, large fonts, voice recognition, etc.

In this article I want to mention some Apps that are particularly appropriate for people with hearing loss. So far in my research have found applications that can turn the iPhone into a pocket talker, hearing aid, audiometer, sound level meter, tinnitus retrainer, and environmental sound generator among others.

In the short space I have I will review a few of these Apps that I have found useful.

1. **Hearcules.** I mention this one first because it is particularly designed to help prevent hearing loss. It is a sound detector that you can use in a noisy environment to sample the sound and let you know if it is dangerous to your hearing. It can be turned on in a live concert or other noisy location and will continuously sample the noise level and alert you when your ears are in danger. I recently turned it on at a Vancouver symphony concert and was surprised to see that while the noise level was excessive, I was not in it long enough to damage my ears.



uHear. This is one of many Apps designed to actually test your hearing. It is produced by Unitron, a hearing aid manufacturer. I found this one to be the best of all those I tested. With it you can test your hearing and produce an actual audiogram and also test how well you can hear in noise. I recently found this one helpful when I was suffering from a sinus infection that blocked one of my ears. I was able to show my doctor and my ENT the effect the sinus blockage was having on my hearing in the right ear.

3. **soundAMP R.** This clever App turns your iPhone into a pockettalker. Use it for conversations in restaurants, coffee shops or in the car. While there are others, I like this one because it has the ability to record the conversation, if desired, enabling you to listen to it again later. It also has a zoom feature for closeup or distant hearing emphasis. As well, it incorporates adjustments for High – Medium – Low frequency emphasis. (See image below on right)



(Continued on page 8)

4. **SPL Meter.** This App turns your iPhone into a professional looking Sound Pressure Level meter. It can be calibrated and used to make noise measurements similar to an actual Sound Level meter. It can be set for either A or C noise weighting and the range can be set from 40 to 140 dB.



Hearing Aid Battery Recycling

Bring your used hearing aid batteries to our meetings and we will take care of recycling them for you

CHHA—North Shore Branch Programs are funded in part by Social Service Grants from the City and District of North Vancouver and the District of West Vancouver.

Sound Advice

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

(No meeting in July and August)

Next Meeting September 6, 2013

(Holidays excepted) at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre's Social Rec Room, 695 21st Street in West Vancouver.

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; Coping Strategies;

Improving Relationships;

Improving Hearing Environments

For Information call: 604-926-5222

Everyone Welcome



CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION

NORTH SHORE BRANCH

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Name: _____

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Please mail application to:

CHHA—North Shore Branch

Attention: Treasurer

600 West Queens Road

North Vancouver, B.C.

V7N 2L3

Cheque enclosed

Money Order Enclosed

Charitable Registration No.

BN 89672 3038 RR0001

I wish to support the aims of CHHA and the North Shore Branch and enclose my \$35.00 annual membership fee. (National \$25.00, Branch \$10.00). Membership is paid annually from 1 October to 30 September.