

# FRANCIS SLABBER & JANET STEER

AUDIOLOGISTS & HEARING AID ACOUSTICIAN

THE HEARING CLINIC

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## Newsletter Spring 2003

### The Occlusion Effect

Try sticking your fingers in your ears while chewing on something crunchy - then speak and you will experience the phenomenon known as occlusion. It's the closure effect you get when plugging your ears - with fingers, plugs or hearing aids. Sounds generated within the body (for example speech or chewing) reach the ear through the vibration of the skull bones and not only through air via the ear canal. Usually, these sound waves can escape through the open ear canal, so that they're not noticed. If the canal is blocked, additional sound pressure is generated in the closed canal and transmitted through the middle ear to the inner ear. The effect is like speaking into a barrel, with a hollow or booming quality and considerably louder.

Earmoulds and hearing aids block the ear canal to a greater or lesser extent depending on the anatomy of the ear canal, materials used, the depth of insertion, venting and the combination of them all.

Individual ear canals are very different in shape, which implies that there might even be differences in occlusion of one's own two ears.

Venting the mould or hearing aid can decrease the problem acting like a mini-air-conditioning system for optimum air circulation inside the ear canal. Unfortunately vents can also cause feedback (whistling) and can even compromise the hearing. One could also try to alter the shell slightly to fit deeper into the ear canal or touch less of the bony portion of the ear, but the same limitations apply. Reshelling or even sizing up to a bigger mould or model might be necessary.

Occlusion is mostly dealt with within the first few months of wearing new hearing aids. Consistent wearing of the aids helps with getting used to the feeling of hearing one's own voice, but sometimes this process of adaptation can take a bit longer. The mind needs time and opportunity to shape itself around it's new hearing world.

If you ever find yourself wandering through the new Yellow Pages, please stop to admire our new notice on page 714. We are now called Francis Slabber and Janet Steer with our address still being The Hearing Clinic, 35 Waterloo Rd, Wynberg. Please note that these are our only rooms and we are not affiliated to any other hearing aid companies.

Many of you might have met Philippa during the past few months while she has been with us part-time. We are very happy to say that as of 1 September she will be joining us permanently as audiologist. It has been a pleasure having her around and we are more than confident that she will be a great addition to The Hearing Clinic.

Many hearing aid wearers have difficulty using the telephone. There are many reasons why telephones and hearing aids often don't get along, but sometimes it's ignorance of how to use a telephone while wearing an aid or of devices that are available to help.

Telkom has discontinued its very useful PhoneAmp, but they as well as other suppliers do stock alternatives, like phones with volume controls, bigger phones with ring tone adjustment and telecoil options for use with certain hearing aids. Please contact us if you need advice on any assistive devices for the telephone, TV etc.

We would like to remind you of the importance of hearing aid maintenance and regular checking of tubes, moulds and ears. Diarise a reminder. Please remember that hearing aids are sophisticated mechanisms that need TLC and for optimum benefit should be used daily.

#### **BATTERIES BATTERIES BATTERIES BATTERIES BATTERIES BATTERIES**

Send us a note with your name, address and battery requirements, as well as payment and we'll mail them to you (please add R2 for postage). Because of price increases and unreliable performance we have been busy investigating some new makes of hearing aid batteries. We will be trying out some of these brands so the prices may vary. Please check the current prices with us before ordering.

Francis will be away from 15 December to 5 January.  
Janet and Philippa will away from 23 December to 5 January.  
All manufacturers will be closed from 22 December to 5 January.  
We can accept repairs no later than 15 December.

**Francis Slabber & Janet Steer & Philippa Round**