

Newsletter Spring 2007

So what *did* you say?

In our last newsletter, we included a questionnaire to try and assess successful/unsuccessful hearing aid use. We would like to thank all of you who took the time to complete the survey and return it to us. Your responses have been incredibly interesting and rewarding and given us much food for thought. Here are our findings:

Questionnaires Sent: 965 **Questionnaires Completed:** 125 **13 % Return rate**

The results are interpreted as % benefit from hearing aids. So if you scored 50%, it means you feel you get 50% benefit from your current hearing aid/s.

75% - 100% 71% felt that they currently benefited more than 75% from using their hearing aid/s. Our goal is never to restore perfect hearing, but rather for you to be satisfied with your choice of hearing aid and at peace with your hearing impairment. One of the challenges of our profession is that in order to achieve a greater quality of life, one needs to set realistic expectations. Those who scored in this percentile, are not necessarily those who have the best hearing aid on the market or who never go out into noisy areas, but those who have come to terms with their losses, compensate appropriately – in hearing aid and in life style – and who are also well known to us. In other words: They come back when they have trouble and we work at it!

50% - 74% 23% rated their hearing aids in this category. This is still reasonable, but one would want to look into why they didn't score a bit higher. These tend to be people who aren't wearing their aids often enough, or only when they feel they might need them. They generally also have milder hearing losses. Due to budget constraints some have had to settle for less than perfect technology for their particular problems. Technology that makes all the difference is usually expensive.

30% - 50% Only 7 of the questionnaires returned, reported less than 50% benefit. These cases should be looked at individually and we're happy to say, that we have dealt with most of them already.

Why and when do the wheels come off? Is it only the choice of hearing aid? Has it got to do with how you are instructed to use your hearing aids? Or do people have unrealistic expectations from technology?

We have come up with a list of typical issues and problems that occur and the reasons why you may have been one of those who rated the benefit of a hearing aid on the low side.

- 🔗 My Hearing aid is not working
- 🔗 I feel blocked up with it in my ear
- 🔗 I can't hear the TV properly
- 🔗 I can't tell where sounds are coming from
- 🔗 It's uncomfortable to wear
- 🔗 I can't use the telephone with it in
- 🔗 It whistles at odd times
- 🔗 I can't hear speech in background noise

Unfortunately, we can't discuss all of these issues in one newsletter, so we'll start a series. We'll address each issue individually in following newsletters, but if you recognize your symptoms, please don't wait for the relevant newsletter – rather visit us sooner so that we can do our best to address them immediately.

Note: It's cheaper buying two aids at the same time, than buying them individually. Hearing aids are supplied with kits and require fitting and adjustment, so it works out cheaper doing them in sets. However, if your medical aid gives you an annual benefit for hearing aids, it might pay you to get one and wait for the next year to get the other. Check with your medical aid so that you can budget.

#1: My !£*?@! Hearing Aid is not Working!

If you are not using your hearing aid simply because it's not working, it is imperative that you get it – and your ear – to us so that we can figure out why. There are some basic checks that you can do first:

- Are your batteries fresh? Try one new battery and if it doesn't work, bring it and your batteries in.
- Is the aid dry or did it somehow get wet? Try silica gel crystals overnight. Not working? Bring it in. Check the tubing on behind-the-ear aids for condensation droplets – gently shake them out.
- Is the aid clean or could it be blocked with wax? Change the wax-guard or clean the tube. Didn't work? Bring it in.
- Have your ears been checked for wax? Let us have a look or ask your GP to check.

Unsure about how to do any of these? Come in and let us show you how. If it is not one of the above, we might have to send the aid for service or repair. Kept clean and dry, a hearing aid should last about 3 – 5 years. If it's older than that, there might be a possibility of it being irreparable due to discontinued parts. All new aids carry a guarantee of between 12 and 24 months. During this time, you should have your hearing aid serviced at least once, and after that, every 2 years. This way, we can keep an eye on it and your ears.

Please check the replacement value of your hearing aids annually and specify them on your insurance!

Bits and Bobs

Nadine: It's been a year since Nadine joined the practice and she's really enjoying her job and the people she meets. You can see her in Kenilworth, Wynberg or Fish Hoek so take your pick!

Batteries:

Earlier this year, our regular battery brand – Power One – increased their prices considerably. As we haven't increased ours in 3 years, we thought we'd shop around for alternatives to avoid a price hike. We found Rayovac's new Acoustic range at a more acceptable price and thought to try them. We have been selling these batteries since January with positive feedback, but if you are experiencing any trouble, please bring in the faulty batteries so we can return them to the suppliers. We are still keeping some Power One as well as Siemens batteries just in case, but these cost R45 per pack of six instead of R38 per pack of six Rayovac.

Discovery Health:

From the beginning of 2007, Discovery Health Medical Aid no longer pays the medical aid rates that we charge for testing. They have their own rate – the Discovery Health Rate – which pays for consultations from your savings account, but only half of the testing fees. Therefore, should we test your hearing, they will pay you back about R100 short of the total charge. They also do not reimburse us directly for testing or hearing aids, but pay the member. This means that if you are with Discovery Health please to pay us first and then claim it back. We understand that hearing aids are expensive and it is sometimes difficult to outlay a lump sum, so if you receive a new hearing aid, please submit your claim to Discovery immediately to speed up the process. Once they've paid you please settle your account without delay to avoid interest added to overdue accounts.

New Premises in Tokai:

Don't forget to pop into our Tokai Practice to see Francis on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In March we moved our rooms a little deeper into the Tokai Village office block to get away from the noise of passing traffic. We have two reserved parking bays and "Audiologist" signs everywhere! Give us a call on 021 -715 5623 for directions.

Website:

Have a look at our Web Page: www.hearingclinic.co.za. We have listed all our rooms and hours and have links to all the manufacturers' websites where you can investigate their new products.

We now also have a "library" on the website where there are links to some other interesting websites which relate to hearing loss and hearing aids. Have a look and let us know what you think. We'll keep it updated.

Just for fun: One of our more mature patients recently visited her GP who had a sign up in his office encouraging people to become organ donors. On asking the doctor if she had any organs left to donate, he replied: "Sure, your hearing aids!"

Francis Slabber
Audiologist

&

Janet Steer
Acoustician

&

Nadine Jooste
Audiologist