

FRANCIS SLABBER, JANET STEER & ASSOCIATES

PROFESSIONAL CARE FOR ALL YOUR HEARING PROBLEMS

THE HEARING CLINIC

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VALYLAND CENTRE

FISH HOEK
KENILWORTH MEDICROSS
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Newsletter Autumn 2006

Diabetes & Hearing Loss

About 5 years ago, just over 800 000 South Africans suffered from Diabetes. By 2030, this figure will be close to 1.3 Million. Research has shown that hearing loss is one of the main complications associated with Diabetes, so given its predicted increase we thought we should take a closer look.

Diabetes is a metabolic disease that could have a wide variety of effects on the body, but what does this mean for the ears?

- ☞ There is a high correlation between Diabetes and High Frequency Sensory-Neural Hearing Loss.
- ☞ Diabetes causes an abnormal production of keratin protein, which upsets the pH balance and natural bacterial activity of the ear canal causing abnormal sensitivity to foreign materials, in turn resulting in increased irritation and infection.
- ☞ It can cause recruitment, meaning loud sounds sound louder than they are.
- ☞ Diabetes can cause more frequent Tinnitus and Balance problems.
- ☞ Diabetics have worse speech understanding than other similarly impaired people, especially in noisy environments.
- ☞ And, those suffering from Diabetes often experience a fluctuating hearing loss and auditory fatigue, causing them to struggle more as the day progresses.

How does this impact on you and us?

- ↔ We need to consider the material used to make hearing aids and determine which size hearing aid would be most appropriate.
- ↔ Diabetic patients need to be aware that consultations with an ENT might be necessary because of the heightened sensitivity of the ear canal.
- ↔ One would need to consider a hearing aid with fairly sophisticated technology to compress the loud sounds and to try to improve the speech perception.
- ↔ A volume control or programme switch might be useful when dealing with a fluctuating hearing loss.
- ↔ Regular fine-tuning of the hearing aids might be necessary to compensate for changes in hearing ability.

Given that 40% of the Diabetic population is over 65 years of age, one should not overlook these facts when discussing one's hearing loss. Knowing about the condition and the challenges it holds, would allow us to choose a hearing aid best suited to the patient's needs. Above all it will allow the user to set realistic goals and expectations.

Hearing Aid Trials

In our last Newsletter, we had to break the bad news that manufacturers no longer allow free hearing aid trials. This time we have good news:

Depending on the model chosen for trial, we have managed to negotiate some BTE Demonstration models for trial purposes.

Although you would still need to pay for a custom made earmould (R200 - unless you have your own), the use of the trial hearing aid will not be charged for. Stock is limited, so you might be asked to wait a while for a specific hearing aid to become available.

Open ear hearing aid fittings have proved very successful and ear moulds are not necessary when trying these. However, open fittings are not appropriate for all hearing losses.



Update on Open Fittings

As mentioned before, "Open" hearing aids are a brand new type of hearing instrument introduced to the market late last year. At that stage, there were few truly "open" aids available, and the technology applied only to top end products, which made them expensive (R12000 - R20000).

Other manufacturers have now caught up and this technology is now available in various models and could cost from about R8000 upwards. Of course, as one would expect, the more advanced models do offer additional benefits that ultimately improve the quality of sound and insure higher comfort levels.

In essence, Open fitting hearing aids are tiny Behind-the-Ear Instruments, which attach to a minute tube that runs into the ear canal without using a traditional earmould. Incredibly, it is less visible than In-the-Ear products and much more economical in the long run. These hearing aids are specifically designed for mild to moderate high frequency hearing losses and would be worn by those who previously had In-the-Ear hearing aids and felt "blocked up", with the sound of their own voice being dull or resonant.

These instruments are not an option for people who also have trouble hearing lower toned sounds.

Hide and Seek

Although it's now been a year and a half since we've branched out, there has been some confusion as to which rooms are open on what days and who will be there. We try to keep things straight forward, but we are also trying to improve our availability and service to you.

- **Wynberg:** Our rooms at 35 Waterloo Rd, opposite the Military Camp, remain our Head Office. There is always someone there who can help - from having your hearing tested, your hearing aids adjusted or serviced, trying something new or just buying batteries or wax guards.
Open Monday to Friday from 8h30 to 17h00. The number to call: 021 797 - 7948
- **Tokai:** Our rooms on Vans Rd, below the Cattle Baron Restaurant, near CTM, are open every *Tuesday and Thursday*. Francis will be there from 8h30 till 16h30 on those days and all the services that are available in Wynberg are also available in Tokai. Feel free to pop in on your way across to the Blue Route Mall. We are no longer open on Wednesdays. *The number to call: 021 715 - 5623*
- **Kenilworth:** Please don't forget about our rooms in the MediCross on Rosmead Ave, near the Spar and Feds Hardware store. Philippa is there every *Monday Morning* from 9h00 to 12h00. All our usual services are offered at these rooms. *The number to call: 021 715 - 5623*
- **Fish Hoek:** Great News! We have managed to find ground floor premises at the Vallyland Centre. Our new rooms opened on 1 March, next to the Post Office and are wheelchair friendly. **No more stairs!** We are also extending our hours in Fish Hoek to a full day. Philippa will now be there from *9h00 to 16h00 every Wednesday*. This does however mean that we have to limit the number of home visits. Now that the rooms are more accessible, we encourage you to consult us there rather than incur the added expense of a home visit. *The number to call: 021 715 - 5623*

The Final Straw

When all else fails, try reaching us on the Practice Cell Phone: 073 731 6222

*Do check the replacement cost of your hearing aid with us for insurance purposes.
Most manufacturers increase their prices in March.*

*Francis Slabber
Audiologist*

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