



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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Editor: Hugh Hetherington Issue 63 December 2008

Mountain Ear

President's Message

Looking Forward to a Social Event

Have you ever dreaded an upcoming social event? I certainly have. As it drew nearer, I would become increasingly anxious or miserable. Or both.



Why did that happen? Well, most of my previous social events had not been very positive from a hearing perspective. As a result, I would anticipate yet another social event where I wouldn't be laughing at the jokes, joining in the discussions, or having a good chat with anyone in the

group. As a result, I was certainly not looking forward to another uncomfortable situation.

Another reason is that I felt helpless and without control over the inevitable. I did not know what I could do to make the situation a positive experience. Now, after many years, I have learned there are a few things you can do in advance to ensure a more memorable event. Let me give you a few ideas.

If the event is in a restaurant, you can check the seating plans and reserve the best location for your group to sit. Ask the hostess if the music be turned down for the first hour or more. If the management is not sympathetic to your requests, you could still change restaurants.

Another idea is to contact a sympathetic member of

the group who will attend and ask if the two of you could meet early. That way you will have a good chat with at least one person. Or you may ask if he/she is willing to sit beside you and help you during the evening. For example, he/she could cue you on the topic being discussed and when you need a repeat or a summary of what was said.

Although my hearing is getting worse and I still don't laugh at the jokes the first time around, I have been able to improve my comfort level with most of my social events. Three ways I have improved my situation:

1. My FM system (by Phonak) is my life line. With it I am able to have a good conversation with one person at a time. So, if the group is having several conversations, I can simply use my Handimic with the person beside me and be able to hear him/her very well. If a group discussion is taking place, I place the Handimic in the middle of the table so that I can hear everyone more clearly. (Of course, as soon as several people talk over each other, I simply turn it off!)
2. We try to come early to the event. That way we are able to chat in reasonable quietness with a few people at the beginning. (And we usually leave early, when the noise is simply too much.)
3. If the event is a stand up affair, I will ask the person I am talking with if we can move to a quieter

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location. This becomes an excellent reminder that I really need help hearing him/her!

My hearing husband often tells me that he too finds the large group events difficult to hear. With that in mind, asking for a quieter location will make hearing easier for the other person as well.

Even though I hear much less than the others in the group, I now get something rather than nothing! And that keeps the dreads and miseries away.

Til next time,

Flo



Annual General Meeting 2008

On Monday, September 22nd at 7:00 PM, the North Shore Branch held its Annual General Meeting at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. There were 22 members, as well as several visitors in attendance. During the AGM, the members approved the president's annual report, the treasurer's report and the 2008-2009 budget. The 2009 Board of Directors was elected by acclamation and included one new member-at-large, Teresa Hemsing, replacing vice president, Andrea Gauthier who stepped down from the Board this year. Karen Hunter now moves into her place as vice president.

Following the adjournment of the AGM, guest speaker, Ben Fernée, audiologist at the Sonus Hearing Clinic in North Vancouver spoke on the subject of "Latest Developments in Hearing Aid Technology".

Ben Fernée hales from Australia and came to Vancouver in 2005. He has worked as an audiologist for about 10 years and possesses a bachelor's degree in Speech Pathology and a Master degree in Audiology. He is currently completing his Doctorate in Audiology. Ben was previously employed as a Siemen's Representative in Australia before coming to Canada. His presentation focused on Bluetooth technology and the latest



Siemens Pure 700 Model

offerings by Siemens, including the "Vibe", a new concept in hearing aid style and the Siemens "Pure", a new product offering Bluetooth connectivity. The "Pure" is Siemens entry in the latest Bluetooth equipped hearing systems and follows the Oticon "Epoq" and Phonak "Exelia" into the market place.



After describing, the styles of hearing aids available for different degrees of hearing loss, Ben went on to discuss Bluetooth, what it is and how it is used in hearing aids. He explained that the name Bluetooth derives from the Danish Viking, Harald Blåtand whose name translates to Bluetooth in English. Bluetooth is a two-way radio transmission technology and provides a way to connect and exchange information between electronic devices such as, cell phones, computers, radios, mp3 players and hearing aids.

The Siemens "Pure" range of hearing aids employs a proprietary Bluetooth device called a Tek transmitter. This provides the interconnection



Tek Transmitter



Remote Control

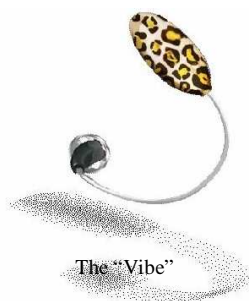
from the hearing aids to the various devices listed above. To connect to the hearing aids there is a remote control unit that can be worn around the neck or in a pocket to make the communication bridge between the hearing aids and the appropriate devices. This unit pictured here alongside the Tek transmitter has provision for 5 individual programs, one of which would be reserved for the cell phone connection and another for connection to the Tek transmitter which provides capability to transmit sound to the user's hearing aids in stereo from a device such as your TV.

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When your hearing aids are linked to your cell phone, the operation is as follows: When there is an incoming call, the ring tone is heard directly in the hearing aids. By pressing the program button for your cell phone on the remote control the call is accepted and the sound is transmitted from the cell phone to your hearing aids in both ears. Your own voice is picked up by a microphone in the remote control and transmitted back to the cell phone. During the call, your cell phone can remain in your pocket or purse. When making an outgoing call, you enter the number on your cell phone, press the call button and the remote control automatically switches the sound to your hearing aids.

Through the use of the separate Tek transmitter, your hearing aids can be linked to your TV, stereo system, mp3 player or other communication device. This helps to overcome the effects of background noise and distance.

To end his presentation, Ben showed the audience the “Vibe” a brand new concept in “open fit” hearing aid style. It features a new shape, a new position



in the ear and looks like a headset or accessory. Because it fits inside the cymba, (see picture below) it is relatively invisible when worn and does not occlude the ear canal. It features an inventive cover concept with interchangeable snap-on covers in 19 different colours including 3 patterns.

This style of hearing aid is only available to people with mild high frequency loss and particularly aimed at first time hearing aid users.

It offers a high degree of comfort and invisibility.

In summary, the new developments in hearing aid technology provided by Siemens, include the following features:

Bluetooth Connectivity – connects your hearing aids to your cell phone or TV.

Datalogging – the hearing aid tracks listening situations and provides the audiologist with fine tuning suggestions.

Noise Reduction – the hearing aid filters out un-



pleasant noise and makes speech easier to understand.

Water Resistance – the hearing aids can be worn sailing or in the rain.

DataLearning – the hearing aid learns and adapts to the adjustments made by the user.

Rechargeable Batteries – the user no longer needs to change the batteries

Remote Controls – the user can discreetly and conveniently adjust the volume and program settings.

Tiny Circuit Sizes – the hearing instrument is truly invisible.

The evening ended with Ben taking many questions from the audience followed by a social with refreshments. Thank you, Ben, for a very interesting and informative presentation.

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 (Holidays excepted) at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre's Learning Studio, 695 21st Street in West Vancouver. (No Meeting in July and August)

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

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.

November Meeting

Balance & Dizziness Disorders

Report by: Hugh Hetherington

On November 19th, our regular meeting was held at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. Our guest speaker for the evening was Betty Macmillan, Information Coordinator for the B.C. Balance and Dizziness Disorders Society (BADD).



Betty, who has experienced balance and dizziness problems for many years started out her presentation by giving us a short history of BADD which appeared in their very first newsletter, the “Balance Sheet” in April 2000. “In 1999 Muriel Kauffman, a local journalist, wrote in her newspaper column about her 30 year struggle with a balance and dizziness disorder. She was in the midst of the worst siege she had ever had and couldn’t even stand upright, let alone think. A weekly column was due and she couldn’t come up with an idea so in desperation she wrote about what she was going through. So great was the response that she asked her doctor whether there was a support group to which she could refer these people, who like her, were devastated by the social isolation and hopelessness. He said, ‘No, why don’t you start one?’ Later, when she felt somewhat better she took the first step. With the help of her ear specialist, Dr. Graham Bryce, Director of the Division of Otolaryngology at St. Paul’s Hospital, she organized a public meeting held June 10, 1999 at St. Paul’s. From that first meeting, attended by 35 people, came momentum – enthusiastic volunteers backed by supportive professionals.” This led to the subsequent incorporation as a B.C. non-profit society in October 1999 and registration as a Canadian charitable organization in January 2000. Their charitable registration number is: BN 883457327 RR0001.

The society currently has 226 members and holds meetings every other month at which they feature talks by professionals on relevant topics. These meetings are open to the public and are free of charge. Muriel Kauffman served as president over many of the years and has recently stepped down.

The society has a Board of Directors made up of members and an advisory committee that includes neuro-otologists, a neuro-physiologist, a physiotherapist and an accountant to look after the business side of the society.

The members of the society are not qualified to give medical advice, but themselves have or have had vestibular disorders. They do not recommend or endorse particular doctors or physiotherapists but will advise inquirers where suitable medical practitioners are located near to them.

Betty, who has Meniere’s and a unilateral hearing loss, went on to say that she had twice visited our “Sound Advice” workshop at the Seniors’ Centre in West Vancouver where she benefited from the support and advice given on hearing loss. She found that our problems are similar in that they are hidden and most people, including family and friends, and medical professionals often do not understand our needs and how we feel.

She mentioned that the only other Balance and Dizziness support group that she knows of in Canada is the Ontario Meniere’s Group run by John Gearin, General Support Services Counsellor with the Canadian Hearing Society in Peterborough. John regularly sends their society’s news to be published in the “Balance Sheet”, BADD’s quarterly newsletter.

In talking about balance and dizziness disorders, Betty stated that the most common vestibular disorders include Benign

Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV), Meniere’s disease, and infections of the inner ear called Labyrinthitis or Vestibular Neuronitis. She said that the most frequently reported symptoms of vestibular disorders are dizziness, unsteadiness or imbalance when walking, vertigo, and nausea. These may be quite mild, lasting minutes, or quite severe, resulting in total disability. They can also affect your vision, hearing, memory and/or coordination. She mentioned



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that it is important to know that there is a difference between dizziness and vertigo. When consulting a doctor it is very important to describe your condition correctly in order to get the proper treatment.

In her own experience, when she first consulted her GP he was of no help at all. On the second visit he asked her how long the dizzy spells lasted. When she told him two hours or more, he was astonished and said he thought they only lasted a few seconds. At the time she didn't know any better and just told the doctor that she was dizzy, when in fact the whole room was spinning around and she was suffering



from vertigo. She mentioned there was a hand sign you could use that doctors immediately recognize. This sign is pointing your index finger upwards near your head and moving it in a circular motion. This is not to be confused with the index finger pointing towards the head, which means something entirely different.

In talking about the causes of dizziness and balance disorders, she said there were many. Lightheadedness, which is a common experience, often happens when standing up quickly from a lying down position. It can have more serious causes like poor circulation caused by hardening of the arteries, blood pressure, high cholesterol, anemia or inadequate heart function. Certain drugs that have the effect of decreasing the blood flow to the brain can also cause it. Stimulants such as nicotine and caffeine could be a cause, and excess salt can lead to poor circulation. Other causes could include stress, injuries, infections, allergies, brain tumours and neurological diseases.

Betty mentioned that their brochure lists four goals:

1. To become more informed about balance and dizziness disorders and related topics.
2. To build a support network for people with balance and dizziness disorders
3. To help educate the public and health professionals about balance and dizziness disorders and their effects.
4. To improve the lives of people affected by balance and dizziness disorders.

At their general bi-monthly meetings at St. Paul's Hospital, the guest speakers who are usually health professionals, advise on treatments, medications, alternative medicines and helpful exercises. These talks are reported in their quarterly newsletter, the "Balance Sheet".

BADD is associated with VEDA, the Vestibular Disorders Association in Portland, Oregon. They find this organization an excellent resource and have a binder full of their pamphlets with descriptions of the many vestibular disorders, their causes and how to cope with them. They were also members of the International Meniere's Federation until its dissolution in early 2008. They are now looking towards the Swedish Meniere's Association to replace this valuable connection.

BADD is also accumulating a resource list of medical professionals who deal with balance and dizziness issues. This includes Otolaryngologist/Neuro-Otologists who are Ear, Nose and Throat Physicians (ENT's) specializing in vestibular disorders and a list of Vestibular Physiotherapists who are specially trained to diagnose and treat BPPV (Benign Positional Paroxysmal Vertigo).

BADD also sponsors special Tai Chi for Balance classes and Vestibular Rehabilitation Classes. This information can be found on their website listed below or by calling the Society directly at the number given.

As Information Coordinator for the organization, Betty answers emails at:

info@balanceanddizziness.org, the contact point for support for people with balance and dizziness disorders. She receives emails from around the world and cited many instances where she was able to direct the inquirers to medical resources in their local area. They have a local telephone number, 604-878-8383 and a toll free number, 1-866-780-2233. Their website is: www.balanceanddizziness.org and their mailing address is: #325 – 5525 West Boulevard, Vancouver, B.C., V6M 3W6.

The evening ended with many of the audience members sharing their own experiences and how they coped in their situations. Following the meeting, refreshments were served and Betty remained to speak with many of the audience individually. Thank you Betty for a very interesting and informative presentation.

Hearing Loss Hard On Couples

Frustration and suspicions of selective hearing are among problems faced by married couples with one spouse suffering from hearing loss. Almost half of those questioned in a study about the effects of hearing loss stated that hearing impairment adversely affects their marriages.

Hearing loss creates problems between married partners, according to a survey among men and women, aged 44-62 years, whose spouses were hearing impaired. Almost half of the 1,065 respondents said their spouses' hearing loss had adverse affects on their marriages.

Irritation and suspicions about selective hearing

The most common negative effect on spouses of people with hearing loss is frustration. Nearly seven in 10 reported that they become frustrated when their spouse is unable to hear them. 16 percent feel ignored and another eight percent said they become sad or hurt.

Barry Williams, an audiologist, and member of the team of researchers behind the survey, pointed out that married partners must co-operate and encourage healthy hearing habits in each other. He emphasized the importance of having a hearing test at the first suspicion of a hearing loss.

Source: Reuters

Reprinted from BH News Group, November 24/08

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.

Are You Surprised At These Statistics?

Comment by Flo Spratt.

I certainly am not! As we all know, marriage can be hard work, with or without a hearing impairment. And one of the key ingredients of a healthy marriage is communication, the very area that is being affected by hearing loss. When hearing loss comes along later in one's marriage, it is not always well understood by either spouse.

The good news is there is help available! Hearing spouses, family members and friends are invited to come with their hearing impaired loved ones to our *Sound Advice* workshops, held every first Friday of each month (see the notice on page 3). In these meetings, we explain what "selective hearing" is really all about, we discuss the various types of hearing loss and how they affect communication. We also present effective strategies in communicating in a variety of settings. We also have available a booklet, *Talking with Hard of Hearing People—Here's How to Do it Right* and a DVD: *Hearing Loss in the Family*. Both of these very helpful publications are free of charge. If you would like one or both of these, you can pick them up at one of our meetings. We also teach a course, *Managing Your Hearing Loss*. The hearing impaired person learns speech reading and coping strategies and is provided a wealth of knowledge regarding hearing loss. Registration for the next course will begin in the Spring of 2009 at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre.

As you can see, the North Shore Branch wants to be your resource in this vital part of your life.



**CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION
NORTH SHORE BRANCH
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov. _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: _____

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.