



Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

North Shore Branch

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Mountain Ear

Prez-Mez

By Mike Hocevar

Greetings to you all! Learning so much through our Sound Advice and public guest speaker presentations provides great personal satisfaction; all of these noticeably help us in our day to day personal communications with others.

Tips on coping strategies, learning about the latest hearing aids and assistive technologies available, and even understanding the physical and mental aspects of hearing all make it easier and help to provide the confidence to manage our hearing loss. And much information is available anytime just by calling our branch.

Along these lines, I thought I'd share something from my Speech Reading Level 1 class that I am currently taking at Vancouver Community College, the instructor being one of our previous Summerhill guest speakers, Lisa Dillon Edgett. This is the "Never mind" scenario. Do you recall some moments when you didn't catch something said and after a couple times the speaker says "Never mind..." Or how about if you yourself, perhaps though the speaker repeats themselves to you, you just give up and say "Never mind".

Think of the dynamics here. How do you and the speaker feel in both of the scenarios. Is it just brushed off? Is there resentment? Tension? Frustration? Feeling of not being important, etc? What do you remember in such a situation? There is an an-

swer besides just having whatever said being repeated over and over until it is understood. This requires assertiveness on our part. That is assertiveness, not aggressiveness. In other words, just managing the situation for a result, and not to just let it slide. And the big thing to remember is that human nature generally is that people will help those who need help, but only if they understand what the assis-

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April Presentation

Monday, April 28, 2014

7:00 pm at the Summerhill

135 West 15th Street, North Vancouver

Guest Speaker

**Sharon Miller, Manager
Communication Aids Department,
Western Institute for the Deaf and
Hard of Hearing**

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tance should be.

What is so often appreciated and accepted by the other party in the above situation is to indicate, "I want to hear you, it's important to me what you are saying" and to propose what will improve your spot listening situation. This is where your assertiveness comes into play.

Some of the responses when something isn't heard, perhaps a second time, might be related to the environment. Is there a radio or other loud audio device interfering. Then suggest turning the volume down. Or, if there is another sound interference, suggest just first closing a door, window or moving to a better spot. The voice of the speaker is maybe at a reasonable volume but not clear. Request they speak a bit slower or use different words. Perhaps have the speaker move closer, face you directly, be in light so that you can see their face, or ??

Managing the situation through your assertiveness will make it easier for both parties!

Other news bits to share with you:

- Speaking of speech reading courses, if this interests you, they are held once a week for two hours over three months. They are offered in January, April and September at Vancouver Community College King Edward Campus. The location is on East Broadway near Clark Drive in Vancouver, just across the street from the Clark Skytrain Station. Cost is just \$57.

- Our branch finances are in good order. We upgraded our technical equipment with the purchase of a new mixer for our meetings' sound equipment. This will improve your listening through our loop system. We will also be printing some more of our brochures and our booklet, "Talking With Hard of Hearing People. We still have many of our hospital kits. So, if you or someone you know with hearing loss is going into the hospital, get in touch with us for a free kit that will make it easier for both patient and medical staff.

- We were also delighted to be able to donate and install an infrared listening system to the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre for their Audio/Visual Room. If you enjoy watching the movies or listening to lectures but have difficulty hearing, this system is available for your pleasure. Just ask the Activities Coordinator for a headset. They are available for both those with and without telecoils in their

hearing aids.

- Hugh Hetherington continues to assist our members with technological advice, advocating for loop systems at local churches and regularly keeping up with news about the latest hearing aids and other products for the hard of hearing.

- I am currently serving on a CHHA BC planning committee preparing for a half day conference. Advance notice to you for marking on your calendar: Saturday, April 26th at 1:00 PM at the Vancouver Public Library downtown central branch. We will have a panel discussion with opportunity for questions & comments on the issue of Hearing Aid costs. More details will be forthcoming in the near future.

- I can also announce at this time the topics for our April 28th and June 16th Summerhill presentations. In April we have invited Sharon Miller, Manager of the Communication Aids Department at the Western Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WIDHH), to give us a presentation on the latest in Communication and Assistive Devices for the Hard of the Hearing. For June, we have re-invited Victoria Mcleod, the Training Audiologist from GN ReSound Canada, to give her presentation on Tinnitus and the latest ReSound products. If you have tinnitus and missed her talk in November last year you will have a chance to hear it in June. Don't miss it! It is an excellent presentation and very helpful to those with tinnitus.

February Presentation

Report By: Mike Hocevar

Winter time is always a good time to put on a *Sound Advice* session at the Summerhill in North Vancouver. Apart from putting a guest speaker through driving in potential bad weather at this time of the year, it gives those who are unable to attend the first Friday *Sound Advice* sessions in West Vancouver, the opportunity to attend one of these informative workshops. This meeting was moderated by Birgit Cook, Hugh Hetherington, and Bill Friend, all members of the North Shore Branch.

The format followed our usual *Sound Advice* format and was attended by about 25 with several newcomers. We ask newcomers to kick off the session by relating their hearing experience and asking us any

questions they have. Some are common and others not so, therefore, we always seem to learn something new together every time. And it is nice that not only our moderators provide advice, but anyone else with thoughts can add theirs too.

Some of the information that emerged at the meeting included:

- In selecting where to purchase a hearing aid, we won't as an organization recommend one over the other but have available a listing of all hearing aid dispensers located on the North Shore.
- We suggest that you should develop a relationship with your hearing specialist. That means regular follow ups as required to tweak your hearing aids as per your user experience. Hearing aids come with a trial period which is important since it can take a few weeks before your ears and brain fully adjust to the hearing aid. And, you can decide to try a different model if the first is not suitable. You also have the right to switch to another company anytime and to request they obtain your previous records from your former provider.
- A hearing aid will be recommended to you by the audiologist based on the results of your audiogram, a chart that plots the results of your hearing test. Digital hearing aids are powerful computers and can have different programs built in so you can adjust the sound reception for different listening situations by pressing a button on the hearing aid or using a remote control. It is important therefore that one advises the audiologist of their lifestyle requirements for hearing, i.e. are you a musician, are you frequently attending meetings, do you have difficulty on the telephone, is listening to TV a problem. The more information you can share with your audiologist, the better will be your result.
- Price considerations for hearing aids are based on features. Higher end hearing aids that cost more will have more recent technological advances offered by the particular hearing aid manufacturer, including com-

patibility with separate assistive accessory devices including bluetooth enabled cell phones, remote microphones, FM reception and more.

- Expect the life of a hearing aid to be around five to six years through normal wear.
- Hearing aids will often be water resistant but there are brands of hearing aids available that are fully waterproof and can survive being immersed fully in water. If this is important to you, ask your audiologist about the options available.
- Hearing aids through a telecoil program or switch can enhance listening on the phone. There are also specifically designed phones for the hearing impaired, but one member of the audience who has just 25% level hearing reported a recent purchase of a \$9.95 phone at London Drugs. He claims it "is the best phone he has ever had for hearing!" The message being, you have to try different products and not all are expensive. Always ask the retailer about their return policy in case the product doesn't work out.
- It is generally a good idea to insist on purchasing a hearing aid equipped with a telecoil. It may not be used initially, but as well as for the telephone, it can be used wherever there is a loop system installed, and also more importantly, it opens up the possibility of using a variety of assistive devices in the future should they become necessary. Many churches and some public buildings on the North Shore now have loop systems to work with your telecoil. Over time, the future will see more of these locations.
- Wearing hearing aids will often assist in reducing ringing in the ear (tinnitus) sounds by receiving normal sound on a constant basis. This was confirmed by a couple of people at the meeting who experienced this.
- Be proactive about dealing with hearing loss. It is not just hearing aids and technological devices to be concerned with, but communication/coping strategies, listening environ-

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ments and thinking ahead of potential hearing problems at destinations like restaurants and family dinners. It is most helpful to work out the best hearing opportunity for you in those settings.

- Come to our Summerhill meetings and *Sound Advice* to learn more. These are provided for your benefit.

From one Life to Another, My Hearing Journey

By Rick Waters

Editor's Note: In March last year, our member Rick Waters underwent the surgery for a Cochlear Implant. Before and for several months afterwards Rick recorded his experience with the implant in an internet blog. In the March, June, and September 2013 issues of Mountain Ear we reprinted excerpts from this blog detailing his journey from a profound hearing loss to a new way of hearing with his Cochlear Implant. These issues are available in our newsletter archive on our website at:

www.chha-nsb.com,

or you can read Rick's entire blog at:

Rickwaters69.wordpress.com/going-bionic-a-cochlear-implant.

In November 2013, Rick received an upgrade to his speech processor and again opened up his experience to us on the blog. Reprinted here is the entire entry detailing his experience with the new Nucleus 6 processor.

It's been a long while since my last post, but now, with a new processor, I thought it might be a good idea to update the blog, just a bit. This new piece is all about the new Cochlear N6 processor, an upgrade which I received about two months ago.

All new, all over again!

In early November, my audiologist advised me that Cochlear Corporation, the makers of my Nucleus 5 implant, were giving me a complimentary update to the latest processor, the Nucleus 6. The new processor, with a much more capable chip, offers wireless

connectivity, and an intriguing "hybrid" mode, in which it provides stimulation both electrically, via the implant, and acoustically, with an integrated hearing aid component.

Exciting? For sure! On Thursday, the big moment came. The audiologist had already installed my maps on the new processor, and we spent some time going over the new program options, and how to use the new Remote Assistant. I said goodbye to my old Nucleus 5, the processor which had opened up the world of sound for me, and we switched on the new one.

What did I get?

First of all: What was in the box? The new processor, model CP 910, was there, of course, as well as two of the compact-sized rechargeable batteries, which I ordered. As well, Cochlear included the two new remotes that were introduced with the processor, the CR 230, the advanced Remote Assistant, and the CR 210, the key-ring sized basic remote unit. Also in the box, the recharger for the remote control, a complete documentation package, the headpiece (coil), the headpiece cable, a USB cable for the remote assistant, the magnet, and a set of replacement microphone protectors. I was able to keep the old headpiece, and all the other accessories which came with my N5 processor, as they are all compatible with the new unit, a wonderful bonus.

What's new?

So, what's new with the new CP 900 series processors? The principal point of change is a new custom microchip, which gives the new processors some advanced capabilities. Other changes are a small reduction in the size of the processor, a new ear hook system, and some minor cosmetic changes.

Cochlear have developed a new "SCAN" program, which is essentially an "automatic transmission" for the processor. Just as an automobile transmission has a number of gears which are each suitable for different driving situations, so the processor has a number of different programs, each of which is suitable for different listening situations. There are programs for QUIET SITUATIONS, SPEECH, SPEECH IN NOISE, WIND, MUSIC, and one called FOCUS, which utilizes zoom microphone technology. SCAN

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constantly analyzes the sound environment, and chooses which program is most suitable for the situation.

In addition to this new processing strategy, the CP 900 series of processors have wireless connectivity built in to the chip, using 2.4 GHz technology. Cochlear have teamed up with GN Resound, a Danish maker of hearing aids, to use the same technology and series of connectivity devices, and this will be available by way of a software upgrade, as soon as approval for release is obtained. As well, these processors can operate in a hybrid mode, which offers simultaneous electrical stimulation and acoustic stimulation with a plug-in hearing aid component that replaces the standard ear-hook.

How does it sound?

My audiologist has requested that I use the SCAN program, and that I provide some feedback for her, and so that's what I'm doing. After about a day and one-half, I've gathered a few observations, but first, my overall impression of the sound quality is that it's quite significantly improved over the older model. Voices have a "fuller" sound, and the sound quality in the high frequencies is still crisp, and precise. The Remote Assistant, which communicates bi-directionally using 2.4 GHz radio technology, has an informative screen which tells which of the programs the processor has selected.

As I left the clinic, I walked out into a busy downtown urban street. The NOISE program came on almost instantly, and much of the traffic roar was reduced substantially. However, at the same time, the unit reduced the apparent volume of my own voice, and presumably would have reduced the volume of the voice of any person with whom I had been conversing. I got on my bicycle, and rode home, and noted that the WIND program was invoked, and that it did reduce the wind noise frequency bands significantly. At home, the unit sometimes had trouble deciding whether it was a quiet situation, or whether, when my wife and I were talking, it was a speech situation. As it turns out, it didn't matter, as I was able to follow the conversation without any difficulties.

Yesterday morning, I went to the local community centre for my weekly dose of Tai Chi. The room has a noisy ventilation fan, and I noticed that when the unit switched into the noise program, the voice of the

instructor was attenuated a bit more than I'd have liked. I used the remote to switch to the EVERYDAY program, which was my go-to program on the old unit. That restored the instructor's voice to the normal level. Thinking about it later, I could probably just upped the volume a notch or two. And finally, last evening, I chose to watch the evening news on the television. In our open-plan house, my wife was watching something else on the kitchen television, and the unit decided that I was in a SPEECH IN NOISE situation. Again, the television voice sounds were attenuated, so I once again switched to the EVERYDAY program, as I had done at Tai Chi.

Today, I took some time to listen to music with the new unit. I did so using the SCAN program, and noted that for most types of music, the unit switches to the music program quite quickly. The exception seems to be some forms of choral music, which can sometimes confuse the unit, as it reports out on the remote assistant that it is in a noisy environment, or a speech in noise environment. The new processor does a better job than the older one at pulling individual voices and instruments out of the total sound environment, and reproduces the sound so that familiar melodies are rendered accurately. As with the older unit, and indeed with most CIs that I've read about, the sound is weak in the bass registers, resulting in an overall "thin" quality. Despite this, my music listening experience was enjoyable.

Initial Summary

I'm generally well-pleased with the improvements in the quality of sound. The SCAN program generally works as intended, but I am left wondering whether I might not be better off to let my own brain, which has proven quite plastic, to make the adjustments itself. Perhaps the SCAN program feature is intended for those who have more difficulty hearing with a CI than I do. And something I haven't mentioned yet is that with the new compact rechargeable batteries, I'm seeing 17 hours of continuous use per battery. As these are considerably smaller and lighter than the

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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.

standard batteries, I'm well-pleased with the life, and as a bonus, the lighter weight on my ear is a welcome change.

Would I recommend this upgrade to others? For anyone using the older Freedom processor, for sure! For those with a Nucleus 5, the improvement in sound quality is closer to evolutionary, rather than revolutionary. But, the upcoming wireless connectivity, and for those whose hearing loss is appropriate, the hybrid mode offers real advances. All in all, I think Cochlear have done a great job of advancing the technology and feature set in their processor, and for those who are upgrading from the N5, the compatibility with the older batteries, coils, cables, etc., is most welcome.

Mark your Calendar now for our June 16th Summer-hill presentation. We have re-invited Victoria Mcleod, M.Cl.Sc., Aud(C) the Audiology Trainer for GN ReSound Canada to give her presentation on Tinnitus and the new ReSound products. If you missed her excellent Tinnitus presentation in November, this will be your chance to hear it.

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 Municipal Community 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)

(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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Attention: Treasurer

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North Vancouver, B.C.

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Cheque enclosed

Money Order Enclosed

Charitable Registration No.

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I wish to support the aims of CHHA and the North Shore Branch and enclose my \$40.00 annual membership fee. (National \$30.00, Branch \$10.00). Membership is paid annually from 1 October to 30 September.