



June 2021 Newsletter

Renew your membership in our local chapter for only \$15 a year! Ways to renew: pay at our website on the "Donate" button in the upper right-hand corner; mail your renewal with your name, address, phone number, and e-mail to: East Bay Chapter, HLAA, P.O. Box 12484, Oakland, CA 94604-2484. See back page to sign up and support National HLAA.



Bay Area Walk4Hearing

Saturday, June 12, 2021

Virtual Celebration
9 a.m. (PT) – Program starts

Platinum Sponsor



Learn more and register at walk4hearing.org



Our June meeting will be: 2021 BAY AREA WALK4HEARING, SATURDAY, JUNE 12! JOIN US! 9 a.m. to noon (Note earlier start time). HLAA-EB is teaming up for a spectacular Walk4Hearing event right here in the Bay Area to celebrate and promote hearing health. Join us for a celebration that energizes our community, provides support, and encouragement. You'll see our impact, share stories, and be entertained by a star-studded line-up of:



D.J. Demers – Standup Comedian



Mandy Harvey – singer/songwriter



No Limits for Deaf Children

Please join our Hear'Oh's team here:

https://secure2.convio.net/hlaa/site/TRR/Teamraiser/BayAreaSanFranciscoWalk/2143655639?pg=utype&fr_id=2676

1. Click "Register as a New Walker" button
2. Enter: "East Bay" and click "Search for Team" button
3. Click "Join" button

4. Click "Next Step" button
5. Complete the form.
For item "2. A portion of funds ... " under "Additional Information", for "Please select a response", select "HLAA East Bay" from the dropdown list.
6. Click "Next Step" button
7. Click "I agree" and click "Next Step" button
8. Click "Complete Registration" button

Win a Prize!

Sign-up for the Walk Day Online Celebration and you'll be entered to win one of our incredible prizes. You must be present on Walk Day to win.



Fitbit Versa 3



Williams Sound PLA 240 Small Room Loop Amplifier



Amazon Gift Card

MEETING NOTES: Hearing Loss & Its Effect on the Brain, Cognitive Function & Social Relationships

At our May 8, 2021 HLAA-EB Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Dr. Margaret (Meg) Wallhagen, Ph.D. GNP-BC, AGSF, FGSA, FAAN, Professor, Physiological Nursing, University of California, San Francisco, California. Dr. Wallhagen has conducted a number of research projects in gerontology and chronic care management. Her research and related publications focus especially on how older individuals and their families manage chronic illnesses, as well as changes that occur with age. She has also explored issues related to informal caregiving, diabetes, and successful aging, but for the last several decades has focused specifically on hearing loss. Her most recent work included a four-year longitudinal study of the experience of hearing loss in older adults and their partners.

In addition, Dr. Wallhagen has served since 2006 as the Director of the UCSF/John H. Hartford Center of Gerontological Nursing Excellence. In 2018, she was honored as she became the very first recipient of UCSF's Hearing & Speech Center's Annual Integrity Award. She has quite a strong track record of community service to both local and national nonprofits, including her leadership as past Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA).

Importance of Hearing: Hearing is so important to all of us for several critical reasons. Here are a few examples:

- Warning of danger such as sirens & high-pitched alarms or alerts

- Engagement with others in conversations, discussions & meetings
- Connection to our environment, sense of direction & balance
- Cognitive stimulation to our brain & sensory system
- Safe healthcare communication & understanding of level of care needed

Prevalence & Progression of Hearing Loss: Studies demonstrating the trends on the prevalence of hearing loss (HL) indicate that there is a steep increase in the likelihood of HL for each decade as individuals age. Although there are many causes or factors associated with HL, it often starts and progresses very slowly early in life with the cumulative effect showing up eventually on an audiogram later in life. For example, the prevalence of HL for those persons under age 50 is only 8.8%, but typically 81.5% of persons who are age 80 or older have some degree of HL, even if it doesn't show up clearly on an audiogram. Data also indicates that men more often have HL than women.

The Hearing Process & The Brain Connection to Hearing Loss: As described & graphically illustrated by Dr. Wallhagen, the amazing process of hearing and its interconnectiveness to a person's brain is quite complex. Hearing is initially based on air and bone conduction of sound as it is mechanically transmitted through the ear, moving the fluid in the cochlea and the hair cells. Then, the hair cells utilize electrical transmission to send the sound signals to the brain. When any of these intricate conduction and/or transmission pathways are damaged or destroyed, hearing loss may occur, not only as just a decrease in sound, but also a distortion of sound so that words can be easily misheard and misunderstood.

Effects of Hearing Loss on Emotions: Communication is a two-way street between the speaker and listener. Hence, hearing loss often has one or more of the following negative effects on one's emotions & relationships:

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| • Depression | * Sadness in feeling left out/ignored in social situations |
| • Loneliness | * Sense of loss in decline of meaningful conversations |
| • Isolation | * Fear of potential loss of work or valued relationships |
| • Low self-esteem | * Feeling stigmatized by others' perception of you |
| • Frustration in asking others to repeat | * Embarrassment in misunderstanding of information |
| • Fatigued by extra efforts to listen | * Tendency to minimize participation in discussions |
| • Altered functional cognition | * Tired of needing extra energy to hear & remember |

Changes in Hearing with Age & Possible Links of Hearing Loss to Cognitive Decline: The causes for hearing loss may vary widely for each individual experiencing it. The extent of hearing loss may also change with age. Furthermore, studies have indicated that there may exist possible links between hearing loss and cognitive decline or dementia. Of course, there may exist multiple risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia in individual cases. Yet, according to the Cognitive Load Theory, age-related neurological factors impacting sensory changes that result in hearing loss and the lessening of brain stimulation, have been associated with cognitive decline in some cases.

Important Reasons to Address Hearing Loss: Several good reasons exist for addressing one's hearing loss:

- May make listening & hearing less fatiguing.
- May improve social relationships & ability to communicate with others.
- May make it easier to stay engaged socially & in work settings.
- May impact risk factor for loss of balance, falls, & delirium.
- May lessen missing out on or misunderstanding/misinterpretation of important information.
- May avoid or lessen risk of cognitive decline, or at least delay its onset.

- May improve others' perception of you & communication in healthcare settings.

Impact of Hearing Loss (HL) on the Healthcare (HC) System: Several barriers impact HL in HC systems:

- Under-appreciation of the impact of hearing loss on health & psychological outcomes.
- Denial, stigma & lack of awareness of hearing loss by healthcare practitioners.
- Lack of screening for hearing loss in primary care or other healthcare settings.
- Under-utilization of hearing aids (HA's) or other assistive listening devices (ALD's) in healthcare settings.
- Cost of hearing-related care (e.g., HA's) due to lack of Medicare & other insurance coverage.
- Misunderstanding of diagnosis & treatment instructions in healthcare settings.
- Inability to hear enough information to have time to share health-related issues & ask questions.
- Healthcare practitioners having inadequate time to conduct a full assessment.
- Not hearing your name called at appointments in healthcare settings.

Technology for Communicating Effectively: Examples of assistive hearing devices for those with HL include:

- ✓ *Hearing Aids (HA's)* – A range of kinds & costs; single unit vs. bundled service; depends on one's need.
- ✓ *Batteries* – Various sizes & costs for older HA's; rechargeable battery now available for newer HA's.
- ✓ *Hearing Aid Compatible Cell Phones* – Check HA's Compatibility Rating System before purchase.
- ✓ *Cochlear Implants (CI's)* – Tiny electrode is put in the cochlea, which then stimulates the hearing nerve.
- ✓ *Personal Sound Amplifiers* – Sometimes used for mild to moderate HL. Watch so sound not too loud.
- ✓ *Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's)* – Alarm systems for home safety; TV listening systems; pocket-talker.
- ✓ *Specialized Phones & Apps* – Personal Amplifier with Head Phone; captioned phones; voice-to-text apps.
- ✓ *Communication Assess Realtime Translation (CART)* – Live captioning/transcript by on-site captioner.
- ✓ *Telecoils* – Sound goes directly into HA's; Request audiologist put in telecoils when getting new HA's.
- ✓ *Induction Loop Systems* – Used with telecoils; installed in meeting rooms; courtrooms; BART; churches.

What Others Can Do to Enhance Hearing for Those with HL: Politely encourage others to do these things:

- ✚ Face the person with hearing loss, preferably with adequate light on the speaker's face.
- ✚ Don't cover your mouth when talking; wear a clear mask or face shield, if possible.
- ✚ Slow down & speak at a normal rate & slightly lower pitch when talking to a person with hearing loss.
- ✚ When asked to repeat what was just said, try to rephrase using different words.
- ✚ Avoid critical conversations when both persons are tired.
- ✚ Write down shared information when it's important.

Tips That Those with HL Can Use to Improve Their Hearing & Listening: Try out these great ideas . . . now!

- ❖ Recognize the importance of open communication as a two-way interactive process.
- ❖ Let others know about your hearing loss as you emphasize your desire to fully communicate with them.
- ❖ Plan ahead in selecting your meeting surroundings where you can seek out a quiet/less noisy area.
- ❖ Stand or sit in a position so you can read the speaker's lips & see their facial expressions.
- ❖ Consider the topic and its context when trying to follow what others are saying.
- ❖ Ask others to write it down if you're having trouble understanding what they are saying.
- ❖ Try to be well-rested & not fatigued when conversations or discussions are important.
- ❖ Wear your hearing aids & use your assistive hearing devices regularly to avoid damage & hear better.
- ❖ Be a self-advocate so you can appreciate & enjoy your best hearing & listening on a daily basis.

For More Information & Questions: Email: meg.wallhagen@ucsf.edu Phone: (415) 476-4965

~ Kathy Fairbanks

East Bay Leadership Team

The chapter is run by a Steering Committee, Leader Dale Davis, ddavis94605@gmail.com, who also oversees the Membership Database.

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JOIN THE NATIONAL HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION – THEY ARE ADVOCATING FOR YOU!

Go to this URL to join today: <https://www.hearingloss.org/make-an-impact/become-a-memberrenew/>

OR, if you prefer to pay by check or card thru the mail, Nancy Asmundson has membership forms to send to you, or you can contact HLAA at 301-657-2248 or e-mail membership@hearingloss.org.

Your membership form will go along with your payment to 6116 Executive Blvd., Suite 320, Rockville, MD 20852. Call 301-657-2248 or e-mail membership@hearingloss.org.

COSTS: Regular Membership/year (will receive *Hearing Life* magazine in print and digital format):

Individual - \$45; Couple/Family - \$55; Professional - \$80; Nonprofit - \$80;

Online Membership (receives *Hearing Life* mag. in digital format only): Individual - \$35; Student - \$25

Veteran Membership: Complimentary one-year Regular Membership & Lifetime Online Membership.