



March 2022 Newsletter

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Our March meeting will be held March 12 at 10 a.m. via Zoom. Meet and Greet starts at 9:30 a.m. Meet Arlene Romoff, long-term HLAA member, one time head of HLAA New Jersey, and author of two books on her cochlear implant experiences. She'll take us through a fascinating odyssey of hearing loss experiences through excerpts of her books. You'll learn about cochlear implants, the benefits of bilateral hearing, effective advocacy techniques, and some tips from how she has successfully navigated the challenges of hearing loss.

Register for this free event [HERE](https://www.hearinglosseb.org/monthly-meetings-1). Or use this link if you are getting a hard copy of the newsletter: <https://www.hearinglosseb.org/monthly-meetings-1>. After you register, you'll be sent the link to join the meeting. Consider staying after the meeting for AfterWords – a chance to ask more in-depth questions, as well as discuss anything you want with fellow members!

HLAA-EB posts our newsletters to the California State Association webpage and a link on our website. **VOLUNTEER! Contact us to let us know you are available!** Check out our website at: <http://www.hearinglosseb.org/> Contact us at: info@hearinglosseb.org

MEETING NOTES: *Ask the Audiologist: Everything You Want to Know But Afraid to Ask!*

At our February 12, 2022 meeting, HLAA-East Bay (EB) Chapter Leader Dale Davis led a lively panel discussion with 3 local audiologists who joined us and had previously agreed to answer questions on a range of hearing loss (HL) topics. The questions were solicited earlier in the month and submitted by EB Chapter members and other interested parties for use at our Feb. 12th General Meeting. Prior to the Feb. 12th Meeting, the questions were grouped under several major topics and then directed to one or more of our 3 audiologists, according to their specialized area of expertise & audiological practice. The questions and the audiologists' answers are summarized below under each of the major identified HL-related topics.

Introduction of Our 3 Expert Audiologists: Initially, our 3 expert audiologists were introduced as follows:

- Rupa Balachandran, PhD, CCC-A, Director, University of Pacific School of Audiology.
- Peg Lisi, AuD, Clinical Audiologist, Pacific Hearing, Menlo Park, & Mezzo-soprano, San Francisco Symphony.
- Jan Larky, AuD, Director, Stanford Cochlear Implant Center.



Rupa Balachandran



Peg Lisi



Jan Larky

Hearing Aids (HA's):

- ✓ **Q:** *How do audiologists make recommendations for brand or model of HA's to clients?* **A:** Audiologists recommend HA's to clients based on what a client wants and needs, as well as the client's level of HL severity, functionality & style of different HA's. Each audiologist typically works with various manufacturers and after acquiring information about the quality and warranty for specific HA's, is then able to make a recommendation for the best HA's for a particular client. Clients are often urged to try out the HA's to see if they like them. It's a collaborative process between the audiologist and client which works well when clients feel they are in the right place and are getting what they want and need. An audiologist might also recommend useful ALD's.
- ✓ **Q:** *Are there advantages in purchasing HA's from audiologists compared to HA dispensers?* **A:** Yes, there are advantages of purchasing HA's from audiologists because audiologists have more extensive education, training and skills and are therefore more qualified in assessing and managing a client's HL needs. Although HA dispensers have to participate in an apprenticeship and licensing exam, they are generally more limited in training and skills. Nevertheless, HA's dispensers may be OK in some cases if a customer has only mild HL.
- ✓ **Q:** *What are the positives and negatives of over-the-counter (OTC) HA's and those HA's advertised on TV for direct purchase?* **A:** The positives and negatives of OTC HA's vary quite a bit when you open up and look across the entire OTC HA market. The main benefit is that of providing more access to the marketplace for a broader range of people who need HL help, particularly if the OTC HA's work well. However, the extent of HL and readiness level for HA's may be unclear for each individual without appropriate testing and management by an audiologist. In addition, there may be no FDA approval or return policy for OTC HA's.
- ✓ **Q:** *How often would you recommend upgrading one's HA's?* **A:** Individuals may begin to notice a change or difference in how well their HA's are working for them after about 4 years. If this happens, then it might be time to do some research or check with your audiologist to discover what's going on with your HA's and what's new in HA's. Yet, if one's HA's give you the hearing benefit you need for a longer period of time such as 8-10 years, you may be able to keep using your current HA's for as long as you want. Otherwise, ask what's new in HA's.
- ✓ **Q:** *How can we safely remove wax from our ears and HA's?* **A:** Many people experience wax build-up in the ears and their HA's, which can affect their hearing. To avoid or alleviate this wax problem, it is usually necessary to periodically clean out and remove the excess wax from your ears and HA's. Individuals can generally be trained by watching a video or sitting down for a few minutes with their audiologist on how to proceed in removing the old molds and

wax filters in the HA's and replacing them with fresh molds and filters; they can often accomplish this task at home. We were also cautioned about using Q-tips to clean wax from our ears since they may push wax further into the ear or even break one's eardrum. In some cases, it may benefit patients to have a professional clean & remove excess wax from their ears & HA's.

Audiology:

- ✓ **Q:** *What is the best way to prepare oneself for a visit with an audiologist to get the most out of the visit?* **A:** Do some prior planning and preparation including: Be ready to identify your HL symptoms & impact they have on your life. Know your goals & what you want to get out of the visit. Write down the questions you wish to ask the audiologist. Take in your HA's & all HL equipment. Bring in your latest hearing test results. Do your research on HA's & relevant technology, including prices & possible insurance co. benefits coverage, so you can have a detailed discussion & clarification of any issues with the audiologist.
- ✓ **Q:** *What is real-ear measurement, and how much better is it for the user to get it?* **A:** Real-ear measurement is a measure of the exact sound levels coming from inside of a patient's ear and the patient is receiving from the HA's while listening to various recorded speech levels. It also takes into account the shape of the ear. It is the gold standard used to determine whether or not a HA user is receiving the right level of amplification needed at every frequency in order to achieve the best possible hearing when using their HA's. Although some audiologists and HA dispensers do and others don't use real-ear measurement, this measure can affect the proper fitting of a patient's HA's, as well as the proper adjustment of the sound levels to match target amplification levels. Therefore, it is a recommended procedure.
- ✓ **Q:** *Do you recommend a regular interval for persons with hearing impairment to be tested even when they are not experiencing noticeable changes in hearing or other issues?* **A:** Yes, it is recommended that patients have annual HL testing so the audiologist can check on any changes in hearing loss, make any needed adjustments in current HA's, and introduce new or upgraded HL equipment if needed.
- ✓ **Q:** *How do audiologists typically test a patient's speech discrimination ability?* **A:** Audiologists often use the Word Recognition Test to measure a patient's speech discrimination ability. In applying this test, an audiologist will ask a patient to repeat a list of words to determine the patient's speech reception threshold (SRT) or the lowest volume at which the patient can hear and recognize speech. Using this information, the audiologist can then measure the patient's speech discrimination ability.
- ✓ **Q:** *What was a meaningful experience you as an audiologist have had with a patient?* **A:** Each of our guest audiologists acknowledged that they had experienced so many meaningful situations throughout their practice. While stating that it happens every day, they each proceeded to describe a range of situations that arise. For example: Helping family members get the proper diagnosis for their HL so they could fully participate in family gatherings and activities; assisting a musician in making the necessary adjustments to his HL equipment so he could continue in his music career; discovering that a patient was not suffering from dementia, but rather it was HL that was causing the patient's problems. The audiologists noted that it was particularly heart-warming when thankful patients make comments such as "you saved my life."

Cochlear Implants (CI's):

- ✓ **Q:** *Has anything changed since the FDA recently approved CI's for single-sidedness deafness?* **A:** The FDA's approval of CI's for persons with single-sidedness deafness (SSD) has expanded the number of individuals who may now be eligible for CI's.
- ✓ **Q:** *How bad does hearing have to be in order to be eligible for a CI?* **A:** An individual's HL is typically somewhere between a moderate and profound level in one or both ears before a patient should start thinking about getting a CI. Based on a patient's test results of 30%/60DB, an audiologist may determine that a patient is eligible for a CI. Getting a CI can be a rather hard decision for a patient to make and depends on the patient's goals. When a patient gets a CI in one or both ears, the patient will permanently lose their natural hearing in that ear(s) and can't return to their previous status. CI users generally need to be willing to put in the time and effort to learn how to get full benefit from their CI's. When considering getting a CI, a patient should consult not only their audiologist, but also talk with other CI users.
- ✓ **Q:** *How does Earlens work compared to CI's?* **A:** Earlens is nothing like CI's. Earlens uses a tiny lens placed directly on the patient's eardrum. The ear tip transmits high fidelity audio signals directly to the lens, gently vibrating the eardrum across the full frequency range, and thereby improving speech clarity and music awareness.

Tinnitus:

- ✓ **Q:** *Do CI's sometimes cause or trigger tinnitus? Can CI's help reduce or alleviate tinnitus?* **A:** Tinnitus is a ringing in one's ears which can take many forms and range from being simply annoying to becoming a major disruption in a person's life. Tinnitus is not a disease, but rather a symptom of an ear condition. CI's do not cause or trigger tinnitus. In fact, sometimes CI's may even reduce tinnitus, even to the level where it goes away.
- ✓ **Q:** *Should persons with tinnitus that has stayed the same for many years expect to lose their hearing?* **A:** People with HL as well as persons who don't have HL can experience tinnitus. Tinnitus may be triggered by many things, including ototoxicity, a medical condition, and even stress or intense emotions. An individual who has had tinnitus that has stayed the same for a long time should not expect to lose their hearing due to tinnitus.
- ✓ **Q:** *Do audiologists offer services or treatments to help address bothersome tinnitus?* **A:** Individuals experiencing bothersome tinnitus should be tested by an audiologist or physician for ototoxicity or a medical condition that may be triggering the tinnitus. Some audiologists specialize in care for patients with tinnitus and are able to help develop a plan for reducing the most bothersome aspects of tinnitus. Masking the tinnitus by playing music or soft ocean sounds may be recommended to help a patient relax and disregard the tinnitus.

Music:

- ✓ **Q:** *Do users of CI's enjoy music? Q: Do persons getting CI's lose their ability to play music and sing?* **A:** Although it varies, the vast majority of CI users may struggle with enjoying or playing music and singing in tune. Hence, some musicians may be reluctant to get CI's because of the risk of losing their natural residual hearing. Instead, a musician might go bimodal with a CI in one ear and a HA in the other ear.
- ✓ **Q:** *What can a person do when their tinnitus gets so loud that it drowns out a musical performance?* **A:** Consider getting customized (not OTC) ear plugs to help with tinnitus problems during musical events.

- ✓ **Q:** Are there HA's that might help individuals hear pitch, while hearing oneself and others singing? **A:** Research the equipment available (e.g., TE Tuner) that can assist a person to hear and develop better pitch while singing.

Assistive Listening Technology (ALD's):

- ✓ **Q:** Do audiologists encourage their clients with HL to use ALD's? **A:** Yes, depending on the level of HL, audiologists often encourage or recommend that their patients look into some of the amazing ALD's on the market (e.g., the Roger Pen) that they might be able to use in conjunction with their HA's or CI's.
- ✓ **Q:** What resources about available ALD's do you suggest to your clients? **A:** A good resource for finding and reviewing ALD's for those with HL is YouTube, where you can view videos on the various ALD's available.

Balance:

- ✓ **Q:** Do audiologists offer services to help address inner ear balance issues? **A:** Yes, audiologists may address both HL and balance issues with certain patients since they are often closely related problems. In fact, some audiologists specialize in balance issues. Therefore, patients with balance problems may be referred by their primary care physician to audiologists specializing in balance issues or possibly balance therapists.

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) & Audiologists:

- ✓ **Q:** Is there an effective way that HLAA can work with audiologists to support their clients? **A:** HLAA and audiologists should continue to collaborate and join together to offer HL-related webinars and classes. Audiologists can also serve as an important link to HLAA and its many benefits for clients with HL issues.

For More Information or Questions: Please feel free to email or call our guest audiologists as follows:

- Rupa Balachandran: Email: rbalachandran@pacific.edu; Phone #: (916) 325-4638.
- Peg Lisi: Email: drlisi@pacifichearingsservice.com; Phone #: (650) 854-1980.
- Jan Larky: Email: jlarky2@yahoo.com; Phone #: (650) 723-5281.

~ Kathy Fairbanks

MARCH MADNESS



Tech Talk

By (Ms.) Dale Davis
March, 2022



Meet Dr. Clifford Olson

Please Note:

These products and innovations are brought to you for informational purposes only and do not reflect any endorsement by the National Hearing Loss Association of America or the East Bay Chapter. You can follow the links in the column for more in-depth information on the topics presented.



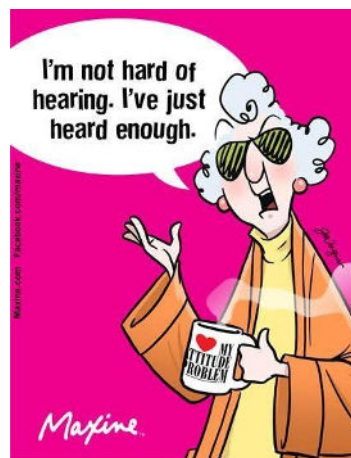
Dr. Olson is a Board-Certified Audiologist and holds his doctoral degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is a member of the Academy of Doctors of Audiology and a Fellow of the American Academy of Audiology. In addition, Dr. Olson hosts his own YouTube channel where he posts educational and entertaining videos about hearing loss and treatment options. There's always something interesting to learn! Check out some of his fun and informative videos here:

- *BEST Invisible Hearing Aids of 2022* https://youtu.be/spkl_Za6x2s
- *The CURE for Hearing Loss Update* https://youtu.be/bV4js_9GUwc
- *Best Bluetooth Hearing Aids of 2022* <https://youtu.be/XiFxPI9Hlo4>
- *Best Hearing Aid Features of 2022* https://youtu.be/u_pWb_wobWM
- *Top 4 NEW Hearing Aid Technologies* <https://youtu.be/F8K7tNX6KMY>

As with all hearing health device decisions, it is always best to consult with a professional Audiologist to find the best solution for your needs.

To contribute to this column, please contact: info@hearinglosseb.org

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PLANNING A VACATION THIS SUMMER? YOU'RE INVITED TO THE HLA A CONVENTION IN TAMPA FLORIDA, JUNE 23- 25! The [HLA A Convention](#) in Tampa is your summer vacation destination! Join our community for some fun in the sun AND enjoy a [discounted rate](#) at the brand new JW Marriott Tampa Water Street Hotel. Planning your time at the Convention? Visit the online [Schedule-at-a-Glance](#) to learn more about times for educational workshops, social events, the Exhibit Hall, a

research symposium on cochlear implants and more! **REGISTER AT:** [HLA A 2022 Convention Registration - Hearing Loss Association of America](#)

East Bay Leadership Team

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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.