



East Bay
Chapter:Newsletter
December 2024



Chapter E-mail: info@hearinglosseb.org
Chapter Address: PO Box 2266, Alameda, CA
94501

December 14 Meeting:

HOLIDAY PARTY!

Open discussion

(HLAA Steering Committee members will facilitate)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 10 a.m.

Kaiser Fabiola Building,

3801 Howe Street, Room G26, Oakland

IN PERSON ONLY (NO Zoom)

FREE parking across the street!

POTLUCK!! *Bring a holiday treat*

if you like, (make sure it is new and delicious)

HLAA-East Bay Chapter will provide bagels and coffee.

See you there!

Have a Happy Holiday!

Questions? info@hearinglosseb.org Please RSVP via the link below by close of business on Thursday, December 12, to reserve a spot: [Home\(hearinglosseb.org\)](http://Home(hearinglosseb.org)) Click on "MEETING DETAILS" then "PLEASE RSVP"

NEXT MONTH: January 11, 2025: LEARN ABOUT DCARA

Amy Gomme, Executive Director of DCARA (Deaf Counseling, Advocacy, and Referral Agency) in San Leandro will be our presenter. DCARA provides services, classes, programs, and support for Alameda County residents who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, such as peer counseling, community education that empowers, lip reading, and much more. Ms. Gomme will present information on the programs and services available for persons with hearing loss.

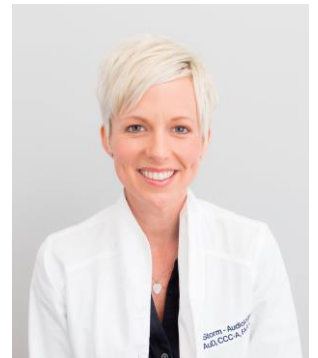
FEBRUARY 8, 2025:

Matt Goncalves, Marketing Director for InnoCaption will present information concerning InnoCaption. He'll also speak of other Assistive Living Devices. With Cell Phone InnoCaption you can easily keep track of your conversation by reading what the other person is saying, as well as your own speech. You can view past call transcripts and much more.

HAAA-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: "Navigating the Soundscape: Innovations in Hearing Aid Technology and Beyond"

At our Nov. 9, 2024 HAAA-EB Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Dr. Susanna Storm, Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA, who gave a fascinating detailed presentation on the latest advancements in hearing aid technology and other new assistive devices that are transforming the lives of persons with hearing loss. After introducing herself, Dr. Storm proceeded in explaining how hearing and the brain work together in people with normal hearing as compared to individuals with hearing loss. She then wanted to take us on the hearing journey, with emphasis on *The Trifecta*, including hearing aid technology, accessories, and auditory training (aural rehab). She also wished to assist us by looking forward beyond hearing aids and providing a list of some practical tips and takeaways.



Initially, she provided us with a brief overview of her family background, as well as her academic and career background before she opened her current place of business, Blue Sky Hearing (BSH).

Our Speaker's Background: Our speaker Dr. Storm was born to parents who were a dentist and a hygienist and therefore expected to go into dentistry. But she decided against dentistry after taking classes and volunteering at CID where children got cochlear implants (CI's) and learned to use their CI's at school. She then went on to a doctoral program at Washington University School of Medicine program, rotating through both pediatric and adult audiology clinics specializing in hearing loss, CI's. and intraoperative monitoring.

With a desire to use her audiology degree, as well as the new and ever-evolving audiology technology, Dr. Storm decided to open her practice at Blue Sky Hearing (BSH) in Berkeley, CA where she serves as both audiologist and owner. With the help of her dedicated and compassionate BSH assistants Emily and Amy, Dr. Storm said that she focuses on the needs of the person/patient rather simply trying to sell a product.

How Hearing & the Brain Work Together: Dr. Storm explained that sound processing is quite a complex procedure, even when the brain works with normal hearing. It is even more challenging in those persons with hearing loss because the brain does not process sound in the same way. Technology is being used to enhance speech understanding and reduce noise (S/N ratio) when sound is sent to one's brain that does not process sound in the same way as in people with normal hearing.

Hence, it's taking many years and hundreds of millions of dollars for researchers/manufacturers to conduct the kind of research necessary in replicating the complicated workings of the brain and binaural (2 ears) processing. Then researchers/manufacturers have to come up with the technology in hearing devices that will help process sound in the manner our brain is designed to do.

Hearing Aid Technology: Hearing aid manufacturers have a tough job as they develop new technology that especially focuses on improving binaural processing, the S/N ratio and overall speech clarity. Dr. Storm selected a few hearing aid manufacturers and reviewed some examples of each one's updated technological improvements in their hearing aids. Dr. Storm noted that hearing devices most appropriate for any individual patient should be based on structured testing in the audiologist's clinic in order to determine which one would work best for that individual's speech understanding and noise management. Although the major hearing aid companies have research and development centers in Europe, hearing aid customization issues are often dealt with by manufacturers right here in the United States. For example, they are currently trying to set up an in clinic 3D ear scanning system called Otoscan that aims to provide better data to assist in resolving HA customization issues.

- **Oticon Intent:** More sound intelligence that analyzes the sound & organizes the sound around the user; enhanced connectivity through Bluetooth & Auracast ready technology for seamless connectivity with various devices; charge 4 hours for 20 hours of wear time.
- **Phonak Sphere Infinio:** AI enhanced speech clarity in noisy environments; innovative infinio platform designed to offer exceptional sound clarity, reduced listening effort & enhanced connectivity; enhanced performance with much greater processing power; charge 3 hours for 18 hours of wear time.
- **Phonak Life:** Moisture protection with highest rating for moisture & debris resistance that allows device to be submerged without long-term moisture issues.
- **Widex Smart Ric:** S/N ratio improvement up to 5Db that can improve speech understanding up to 50%; microphone covers that limit wind & touch noise enhancing comfort.
- **Bluetooth Connectivity:** As explained by Dr. Storm, Bluetooth is a wireless technology that exchanges data between devices within a short distance. Bluetooth is useful in connecting to your phone, ipad, or other devices, thereby allowing you to directly stream phone calls, audiobooks, music, videos, and much more to your hearing aids. Although Bluetooth is clearly an amazing technology when it works, there are several factors that influence Bluetooth's functioning, which can be intermittent at times for a number of reasons. In fact, Bluetooth may disconnect for what seems to be no reason at all, Often, the problem can be pinned down by questioning whether the issues are with your phone or with your hearing aids. If one is relying on Bluetooth connectivity, then one needs to be able to access and follow instructions for reconnecting your phone and your hearing aids.

Hearing Aid Accessories & Their Benefits: Dr. Storm questioned audience members about how many of them used accessories with their hearing aids. She then identified various hearing aid accessories and their benefits.

- ✓ **Oticon's Connect Clip Microphone:** Can be clipped onto a speaker to improve audio quality and is especially good for 1-1 conversations & small group settings, but not as effective in noisy environments, such as noisy restaurant situations; yet, may still help in getting the desired speech signal into your ears.
- ✓ **TV Connector:** Connects to your TV & allows audio from your TV to be directly streamed to your hearing aids.
- ✓ **Remote Control:** Remote option is available for those people who need a simple way of adjusting volume & program with the device.
- ✓ **Phonak Roger System:** Created to handle background noise with noise reduction built into the system.
- ✓ **Smoke Detectors & Bed Shakers:** Research has shown that those persons with mild to moderate high frequency hearing loss (HFHL) have only a 50% chance of being awakened by the high frequency signals emitted by many standard smoke detectors during a residential fire. Therefore, you may want to find a smoke detector that emits a lower frequency signal and add bed shakers.
- ✓ **Widex Sound Assist & Sound Connect:** Tools for improving hearing in different environments
- ✓ **Auracast System:** Auracast is expected to improve accessibility for persons with hearing loss. Oticon, Phonak, Widex Signia, Starkey, and Resound are "Auracast Ready" with firmware updates that can be done in the auditory clinic or even sent through your app. Dr. Storm also noted that all the manufacturers have their own accessories for their specific hearing aids, but this is changing so this won't be the case in the future.

Useful Apps for Auditory Training Exercises: Dr. Storm next directed our attention to the third component of *The Trifecta*, that is auditory training which she feels is equally important in our journey to improve our hearing. She mentioned that there exist many useful apps such as audiobooks and physical books to use in auditory training.

She then demonstrated the recently launched LACE AI Pro auditory training program of brain exercises that may help users in learning how to better process speech and thereby make it clearer in diverse environments and background noise. This auditory training program is not yet available for download, but can be accessed through audiologists.

Beyond Hearing Aids (HA's): Dr. Storm next highlighted a few of the many updates in the field of audiology.

- **Cochlear Implants (CI's):** Dr. Storm reminded us that her specialty is adults with hearing loss and hearing device technology. Nevertheless, she believes it's particularly important for those who have more extensive hearing loss to know about some of the recent changes in cochlear implants (CI's). Just like hearing aid technology, there have been many updates in CI's, including Bluetooth connectivity, more accessories, and bimodal fittings (CI in one ear & HA device in other ear), revised guidelines for CI candidacy, and totally implantable CI's.
- Dr. Storm explained how CI candidacy is determined by using a patient's Pure Tone Averages (PTA) and Word Recognition Scores (WRS). In 2022, the American Cochlear Implant Alliance Task Force recommended that the guidelines for CI candidacy be revised

as follows: As a result of the patient's test results, the PTA be greater than or equal to 60dBDL in the better ear and unaided PRS less than 60% in the better ear. She referred to graphs to demonstrate how these numbers are applied to determine CI candidacy. Along with revised guidelines for CA candidacy, CI's have also changed since their original approval by the FDA in 1985 so that totally implantable CI's are available in 2024. Dr. Storm encourages patients to get assessed periodically for CI's as candidacy guidelines are revised, and CI technology evolves.

- **Research Studies & Regeneration of Hair Cells.:** Dr. Storm pointed out several research studies conducted recently at well-known universities whose findings link hearing loss to increased health risks of heart disease & Parkinson's. The studies also suggest that early screening for hearing loss and early intervention of hearing aids may significantly reduce these risks.
- She then described some of the on-going efforts to develop regenerative therapies for hearing loss. For example, some studies have indicated the potential for regeneration of damaged hair cells. Although most of these studies are at the early clinical trial stage, they lend hope to the possibility of regenerated hair cells and pave the way for future trials for therapies to treat hearing loss. |

Tips & Takeaways:- Before wrapping up, Dr. Storm took a few moments to share some important tips for individuals with hearing loss to take away and use in planning their next steps in living with hearing loss.

- **Hearing Testing:** Have your hearing tested by your audiologist periodically, at least annually or more often if you have any new symptoms of hearing loss, so you can timely get proper hearing device intervention.
- **Hearing Aid Technology Updates:** Check with your audiologist regularly for any new or updated hearing aid technology which might be useful in improving your speech understanding and noise management.
- **Useful Apps:** Try out some of the available apps with auditory training exercises that may be helpful in gaining speech clarity.
- **Caption Phones:** Explore the requirements for getting a free amplified closed caption phone through Caption Call or CTAP programs.
- **Cochlear Implants:** Consider getting reassessed for cochlear implants in light of the revised guideline, if it seems that hearing aids are no longer providing you with sufficient benefit.
- **The Trifecta:** Remember the three important components of *The Trifecta* as you seek out and pursue the best help for your hearing loss.

Wrap-Up; In wrapping up her excellent presentation, our speaker Dr. Susanna Storm suggested that audience members consider investigating some of the resources discussed in her presentation as each individual continues their on-going attempt to improve their hearing and speech understanding by “navigating the soundscape of innovations in hearing aid technology and beyond”.

Finally, Dr. Storm wished to clarify that she had no intention of recommending or endorsing any specific hearing loss treatment or product for any particular person without personal assessment and

consultation. Likewise, the HLAA-EB Chapter leadership reminded everyone that the policy of the Chapter is to not endorse any service, product or person that may have been mentioned or discussed during the current presentation, discussion or follow-up Q & A session.

**For More Information/Questions: Email: drstorm@blueskyhearing.com
Visit: www.blueskyhearing.com**

~ Kathy Fairbanks

Coming Soon: FCC Approves Hearing Aid Compatibility (HAC) Order

A milestone 50 years in the making concluded on the morning of October 17, with a vote by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that requires **100% of cellphones sold in the United States to be hearing aid compatible (HAC) over the next two to three-and-a-half years**. The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) has advocated for decades in support of this much-needed rule that will expand options and make it easier for consumers with hearing loss to purchase phones that work with their hearing aids or cochlear implants (CI).



Left: Barbara Kelley, Neil Snyder, Linda Kozma-Spytek and Lise Hamlin at FCC meeting.

HLAA Executive Director Barbara Kelley and Director of Public Policy Neil Snyder were there in person to witness the historic vote. Making statements before the Commission were retired HLAA Director of Public Policy Lise Hamlin and HLAA's technology adviser Linda Kozma-Spytek.

In a statement to the press, Barbara emphasized, "HLAA has worked toward this increased accessibility for decades, as it takes the guesswork out of an important form of communication for millions of people using cellphones to stay connected."

HLAA Marks 45th Anniversary with New Website

(to use the hyperlinks in this article, Ctrl and left click on mouse OR copy and paste in your browser)

As the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) marks 45 years as the leading voice of the growing number of people with, and at risk of, hearing loss, we now have a powerful new tool to help us all connect, support and empower more people in need: HLAA's completely redesigned website at www.hearingloss.org. It includes updated, easy-to-navigate resources and features to educate and inform, advocate for change and break down barriers in our community and across the nation.

- Visit our new [Find Help](#) and [Understanding Hearing Loss](#) pages, designed to get users to the information they need quickly.
- Want to invite someone to join our HLAA community? See the [Get Involved](#) page for all the ways to join HLAA's hearing health movement.
- If you're feeling apprehensive about holiday gatherings, check out the socializing strategies and resources on our [Living Well with Hearing Loss](#) page.

More resources, pages and functionality coming! Opinions? inquiries@hearingloss.org

We need your help! Can you volunteer? Contact us at: info@hearinglosseb.org

Here is a list of volunteer positions we are seeking to fill:

- **Zoom Assistant** - Assist George Chin, Sr. to run Zoom, cameras, and PA/Audio Loop during in person/hybrid meetings.
- **Camera Operator** - Use a remote control to operate our 2 cameras for in-person Zoom meetings.
- **Volunteer Coordinator**: Contact people who said they could volunteer and tell them about volunteer needs. Recruit for those positions.
- **Outreach Coordinator**: Organize a table for our chapter at various street fairs and other venues. Set up the table. Recruit volunteers to help with the events. Reach out to people who participate in our meetings. Let people know about our chapter.
- **Just want to help?** All of our committees need helpers! All volunteers are welcome! Contact us and we'll help you figure out what would be a good fit for you.

HLAA SF/East Bay Leaders

Our Steering Committee, Leader: Len Bridges, lenbridges3993-hlaa@outlook.com
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JOIN HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (HLAA) – THEY ADVOCATE FOR YOU!

hearingloss.org Membership is now open to all of our valued supporters who help fuel our mission and change the lives of people with hearing loss. **Everyone who gives is now an HLAA member, helping to amplify our HLAA voice, and fulfill our important mission— together!**

COST OF MEMBERSHIP: The HLAA national office had consolidated the donation and membership processes. Presently, anyone who donates as little as \$1 would become a member of the national HLAA. Additionally, with a donation of \$45 annually, individuals have the option to receive a hard copy of the Hearing Life magazine from the national office.