



East Bay Chapter: Newsletter July 2025

Here comes the sun!

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NO PROGRAM MEETINGS IN JULY AND AUGUST! Enjoy your summer!

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

Coming Soon:

- **July/August: NO PROGRAM. Have a great summer!**
- **September: Dr. Gabriel Liboiron-Cohen** from the Berkeley Hearing Center will be presenting in person about **Hearing Loss and Music**.
 - Dr. Liboiron-Cohen holds a Doctor of Audiology degree from the University of the Pacific and a master's degree in Operatic Studies from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (2014). Combining his background in music and expertise in Audiology, he is dedicated to helping his patients enhance their quality of life and enjoyment in all things.
- **October - TBA**
- **November: Courtney Austin @ UCSF, Emotional effects of hearing loss and coping with hearing loss in adults.**
- **December: Dr. Susanah Storm, Blue Sky Hearing – What's new with hearing loss**
- **January, 2025: Brooke Barry, @ UCSF, Spotify research group — Sound and music perception**

NOTE: If you have old hearing aids you no longer use, you may donate them. Drop them off at a meeting and we will make sure your hearing aids get new life for someone else. Also, bring any hearing assistive technology items you no longer use that you may have (such as a Roger Pen or??) to a meeting to see if anyone at the meeting can use them.

MEETING Notes: *"How to Read, Interpret, and Understand Your Audiogram (and Related Things)"*

At our June 14, 2025 HLAA-EB Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Audiologist Dr. Erik Breitling, Au.D., FAAA. Based on his extensive background in audiology, Dr. Breitling gave an excellent detailed presentation about the audiogram that you are given when you have your hearing tested by your audiologist. After introducing himself, Dr. Breitling proceeded in setting forth his agenda, along with a series of PowerPoint slides to support his presentation on "Understanding Your Audiogram".



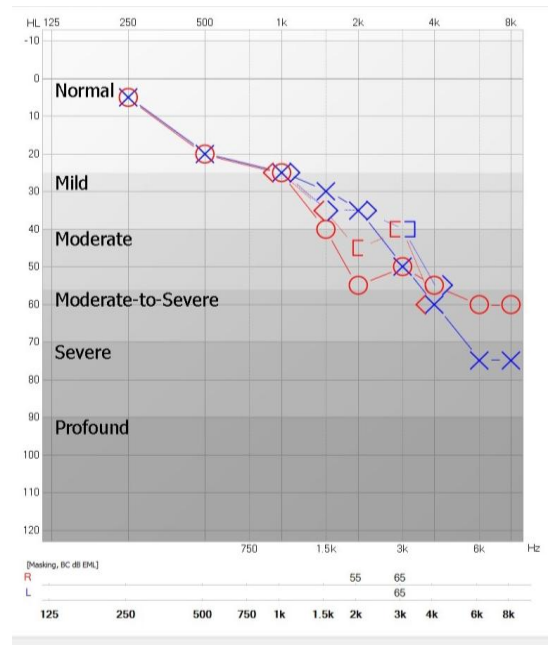
- **Dr. Erik Breitling's Background:** Dr. Breitling is an audiologist with a Doctor of Audiology (Au.D.) degree who is licensed to practice as an Audiologist and to dispense hearing aids in the state of California. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology with an emphasis in sensation and perception from the University of California San Diego. He earned a second Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with an emphasis in Physiology from San Francisco State University. He then attended the 4-year Doctor of Audiology residential program at Salus University. His clinical training included work with adults, geriatric patients, and audiology VA patients. He has several audiology certifications and memberships. He is the owner and primary audiologist at Lamorinda Audiology located in Lafayette, CA. He has been a life-long automotive enthusiast, enjoys traveling, digital photography, and building/modifying computers in his spare time.
- **Lamorinda Audiology** provides comprehensive audiological exams for adults, hearing aid assessments and fittings, auditory rehabilitation and conservation, custom hearing protection, custom earphones for musicians, as well as a range of assistive listening devices (ALDs). More details about the audiology and hearing aid services are provided below.
- **A Typical Audiology Test Battery:** Dr. Breitling generally runs a standard set of diagnostic audiometric evaluations for each patient that may vary somewhat depending on whether they are a new or established patient, as well as the individual's specific concerns and needs.
 - ✓ **Hearing Health Questionnaire:** He always starts by asking a series of questions to determine your hearing difficulties and any related conditions or symptoms.
 - ✓ **Otoscopy:** He conducts a visual exam of your ear canal which can show him if you have any accumulation of ear wax building up in your ear canal or anything else that might require referral by your physician.
 - ✓ **Tympanometry:** This examination is used to test the functioning of the middle ear and how well the ear drum moves. The next part of the exam tests the reflexes of a muscle in your ear which contracts when exposed to moderately loud sounds. The final part is called an acoustic reflex decay test. A moderately loud noise is applied for 10 seconds and used to give more information about the health of your acoustic reflex pathway.

- ✓ **Distortion Product Otoacoustic Emissions:** This test is used to determine the health of your outer ear (cochlea). Otoacoustic emissions are acoustic signals generated by the inner ear normally when acoustic stimulation is not present (spontaneous emissions) or in response to an acoustic stimulation. When these hair cells are healthy, they will make a noise in response to a stimulus. A small microphone is placed in your ear canal to monitor your ear's response during testing.
 - ✓ **Speech Audiometry:** This test is performed in a booth where you will be asked to repeat words from a standardized list. Results from this test along with the results from the pure tone test can assist in determining the usefulness of amplification.
 - ✓ **Pure Tone Audiometry:** This test also takes place in a brightly lit, spacious sound-proof booth which has a full-height glass door and sizable windows. A series of beeps of various frequencies are played. The goal is to find the softest sound that the patient can hear.
- **Compiling & Reporting Hearing Test Results in the Audiogram:** Once the hearing tests are completed, Dr. Breitling proceeds with compiling and reporting the test results in a written report and a graphical report.
- ✓ **The Audiogram:** The audiogram is a fairly simple graph that visually represents your hearing abilities based on your hearing test results. It plots the softest sounds you can hear (your hearing thresholds) for different sound frequencies (itches) for each ear.

- ✓ **Reading an Audiogram:** An explanation of how to read your audiogram based on the axes and symbols is provided below

Axes:

- **x-axis (horizontal):** Represents the frequency or pitch of sound, with lower frequencies on the left and higher frequencies on the right. Measured in Hertz (Hz) with the numbers running from 125 to 8000).
- **y-axis (vertical):** Represents the loudness or intensity of sound. Measured in decibels (dB) with softer sounds at the top and louder sounds at the bottom with a range of 10 to 120 on the audiogram.



Sample Audiogram

Symbols: Hearing thresholds are indicated by symbols plotted on the graph to indicate the quietest sound a person can hear at least 50% of the time for each tested frequency.

- **Air Conduction:** Tests how sound travels through the ear canal to the inner ear.
Right Ear: Typically represented by a red circle (“○”).
Left Ear: Typically represented by a blue (“x”).
- **Bone Conduction:** Tests how sound travels through the skull bones directly to the inner ear, bypassing the outer and middle ear.
Right Ear: Typically represented by a right bracket (“)” or a red “<” symbol.
Left Ear: Typically represented by a left bracket (“(”) or blue “>” symbol.

Normal Hearing vs. Hearing Loss: Healthy hearing is generally represented by symbols within a range of 10 to 20 dBHL, often indicated by a shaded area at the top of the audiogram. If the symbols fall below the normal hearing range, it indicates some degree of hearing loss.

- **Interpreting the Results:** The written report that includes the audiogram of the patient’s hearing test results is used by Dr. Breitling in interpreting and explaining their hearing test results to help the patient understand their treatment options. Although there is no standardized formula for converting the quantitative scale to a percentage of hearing loss, audiograms do provide valuable quantitative measurements. Dr. Breitling also considers the individual’s perception of their hearing difficulties, input from family members, and other important factors in making a diagnosis and developing a treatment plan.
 - ✓ **Pattern of Hearing Loss:** The shape of the lines connecting the symbols on the audiogram provides clues about the nature of the hearing loss. A downward sloping line at higher frequencies is common with age-related hearing loss. A line which rises and drops might indicate hearing loss at specific frequencies.
 - ✓ **Speech Banana:** A patient’s audiogram may include a so-called “speech banana” which highlights the frequency and intensity range of typical speech sounds. If the patient’s hearing thresholds fall below this area, it suggests difficulty hearing certain speech sounds.
 - ✓ **Impact on Daily Life:** Hearing loss can affect communication and understanding of speech, especially in noisy environments. The degree of hearing loss generally corresponds to the potential impact on daily life.
- **Hearing Aid Evaluations:** In reviewing the patient’s hearing test results, Dr. Breitling determines whether the patient is a candidate for amplification via hearing aids (HA’s). If so, Dr. Breitling then asks more questions about the patient’s daily life in order to identify the patient’s unique needs and requirements. All of these big and little details are used to help determine the level of technology for the HA’s.

- ✓ ***The Patient's Choice of Hearing Aids (HA's)***. Dr. Breitling will make suggestions or recommendations, based on the patient's type and level of hearing loss, in helping the patient decide whether to get HA's. In conjunction with Dr. Breitling, the patient also has to make more decisions about the choice of specific HA's, typically based on such factors as their level of hearing loss and need for power enhancements, desired appearance, skin sensibilities and medical considerations, life style and listening needs, ability to see or handle small devices, and of course, cost of HA's in light of the patient's personal budget and any insurance coverage.
- ✓ ***Hearing Aid Fitting:*** If the patient decides to get HA's, Dr. Breitling shares a range of HA's that vary in brand, make/model, strength, size, shape, and color, as well as cost depending on their special features. Once the chosen HA's are ordered and received, Dr. Breitling will contact the patient to come into the office to take delivery of their HA's, at which time Dr. Breitling will configure each HA for the patient's exact hearing loss in each ear, using probe microphone measures to calibrate and fine-tune the hearing devices optimally to ensure that each patient gains maximum benefit from their HA's. In fact, the patient may need to make 2 or 3 return visits to the office to have Dr. Breitling make adjustments to the HA's settings as the patient's brain and ears adjust to the new sounds.
- ✓ ***Hearing Aid Maintenance and Repairs:*** Dr. Breitling reminded us that your HA's are an investment. If you take care of your HA's, they should last a long time and continue to serve you well. Nonetheless, HA's do require periodic maintenance and repairs to ensure that the hearing devices are functioning at their peak performance. Maintenance may simply entail periodic cleaning of solidified ear wax and replacement of acoustic filters or worn out rubber ear molds. HA's have a number of small working parts which may need to be repaired or replaced, which sometimes can be accomplished right there in the audiologist's office. Otherwise, the HA's might need to be sent out to the manufacturer for repairs. HA maintenance and repairs may be covered by a warranty or insurance in some cases.

➤ ***Other Hearing Products:***

- ✓ ***Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs):*** Dr. Breitling described a number of ALDs which may benefit individuals with hearing loss and wearing HA's, but also persons with normal hearing. ALDs are designed to increase the loudness of a desired voice on the radio or TV or of a public speaker without increasing the background noise. Examples: alarm clocks, TV listening systems, telephone amplifying devices, auditorium listening systems.
- ✓ ***Hearing Protection:*** Dr. Breitling noted the importance of maintaining your hearing and therefore taking care to protect it so it is not damaged or lost, especially when exposed to excessively noisy or dangerous situations. Dr. Breitling encourages

individuals to use hearing protection in these situations. Examples: customized musicians ear plugs and monitors, customized swimmer ear plugs, and protective gear for workers in noisy work environments.

Wrap-Up: As he was wrapping up his excellent informative presentation, Dr. Erik Breitling, Au.D., FAAA, encouraged everyone to get their hearing tested annually or more often if they experience symptoms of hearing loss, and to wear their hearing devices regularly during most waking hours. He thanked the HLAA-EBC leadership and members for the opportunity to talk about what he considers an important topic: *“Understanding Your Audiogram”*. Dr. Breitling expressed his desire to spend adequate time with each of his patients in addressing their individual hearing needs and concerns while developing a personalized treatment plan.

Finally, Dr. Breitling invited current audience members to make comments and ask questions. He also shared details where he could be reached for further follow-up information and questions. He did note that he did not intend to recommend or endorse any specific technique, product, or brand for anyone without professionally examining and consulting personally with that particular individual. 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: Visit: www.LamorindaAudiology.com Call: 925-262-4242 Fax: 925-262-4255 3744 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite #100; Lafayette, CA 94549 Email: info@lamorindaaudiology.com

~ Kathy Fairbanks



Happy Summer!

You may be interested in participating in this study at UCSF...

UCSF Department of Otolaryngology

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED!

Hearing Device and Music Perception Study



We are looking for **Cochlear Implant users, Hearing Aid users, OR users of both devices (age 18+)** to take part in a study examining **differences in music perception abilities.**

As a participant, you will complete 1 survey and 3 music-related listening tasks. **The study consists of 1 visit, ~2 hours, at the UCSF Parnassus campus.** You will be paid \$15/hour with parking expenses also covered.

For more information or to participate in this study, please contact:

Emmeline Lin

Email: emmeline.lin@ucsf.edu

Phone: 415.712.5586

This study has been reviewed and approved by the UCSF Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Principal Investigator: Nicole Jiam, M.D.

**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

NEW! The Steering Committee has become the Board of Directors:

Contact us at: info@hearinglosseb.org

President: Len Bridges

Vice President: Peter Townsend

Secretary: Linda Gee

Treasurer: Len Bridges

Director of Technology: George Chin, Sr.

Director of Membership: Connie Gee

Co-Director of Programs: Robin Miller

Co-Director of Programs: Verna Dow

Co-Director of Newsletters: Nancy Asmundson

Co-Director of Newsletters: Kathy Fairbanks

Director of Publicity: Marlene Muir

Consulting Legal Counsel: Gerald Niesar

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services: Audrey Spinka,

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.