



East Bay Chapter Newsletter



July 2026



Happy 250th anniversary America!
Chapter E-mail: Info@HearingLossEB.org
Chapter Address: PO Box 2266,
Alameda, CA 94501

*Happy 250th Anniversary United States of
America!*



**HAVE YOU BEEN TO OUR NEW LOCATION? KAISER HOSPITAL, 3600
BROADWAY, OAKLAND, ROOM LL-B. COME IN PERSON THIS MONTH!
EVERYONE LOVES IT!**

NO Second Saturday meeting in July and August! Have a terrific summer!

***Next Hearing Loss Association East Bay Educational Meeting, Saturday,
September 12, 2026:***

Speaker: Dr. Tina Childress, a late-deafened audiologist . Au.D., CCC-A — Power in Your Pocket or Purse, iPhone and Android Accessibility Features for People with Hearing Loss. Welcome to the fourth meeting of our 40th anniversary series.

Please register at: www.HearingLossEB.org

RSVP by: Friday, Sept. 11, 2026, 5:00 p.m.

Schedule:

- **9:30 AM: Social and Refreshments**
- **10:00 AM: Presentation (Zoomers can join at 10 AM)**
- **11:30 AM: Complimentary Pizza**

NEW LOCATION: Kaiser Permanente Oakland Medical Center, [3600 Broadway](#), Lower Level Conference Room LL-B, Oakland CA 94611

Parking Option 1: Free parking across the street from the Kaiser Fabiola Building at the [3780 Howe St. Parking Garage](#). Walk half a block to the North Entrance of the Oakland Medical Center at [275 West MacArthur Blvd.](#) (See more information on the next page)

Parking Option 2: The first two hours are free at the Kaiser Oakland Medical Center, [3510 Broadway Parking Garage](#); each additional 30 minutes costs \$1, with a maximum daily charge of \$18 after five hours.

Direction: Once inside the Oakland Medical Center, take any elevator to the Lower Level. Follow the signs to the Lower Level (LL) Conference Rooms. Our meeting will be held in Conference Room LL-B.

The meeting is available both In-Person and Virtual (Zoom Webinar).

Questions? Info@HearingLossEB.org

HCAA-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

NOTE: Donate old hearing aids or assistive technology items. Drop them off at a meeting and we will make sure your items get new life for someone else.

Coming Soon:

We are lucky to have Robin Miller and Vera Dow organizing our speakers! We have speakers planned through the end of the year!!

- **July/August: Summer Break, No general meetings**
- **September 12, 2026: Dr. Tina Childress, a late-deafened audiologist**
- **October 10, 2026: Ann Thomas, Assistive Listening System presentation**
- **November 14, 2026: Pamela Durkin, Canine Companions**
- **December 12, 2026: Christine Lim, Visiting an ENT.**

NOTE: Donate old hearing aids or assistive technology items. Drop them off at a meeting and we will make sure your items get new life for someone else.

Celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the USA!

Celebrate our chapter's 40th Anniversary!

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**Dr. Susanna Storm, audiologist and owner of Blue Sky Hearing,
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- Thank you Mike Miles! For your generous sponsorship! HLAA Chester County PA Chapter, Outreach and Scholarship Coordinator
- Rube Warren, in honor of Len Bridges
- Jasmin and Jay Mumford, The Jasmin and Jay Giving Fund
- Len and Sophie Bridges, Honoring serving our chapter
- Larry and Linda Gee, Proud of HLAA-EBC accomplishments over 40 years!
- Verna Dow, Grateful for the information and support over the years.
- Wendy Sanda, Realtor



CONSIDER A SPONSORSHIP DURING OUR 40TH YEAR!

In 2026, we proudly celebrate our chapter's 40th anniversary--four decades of education, advocacy, and support for our hearing loss communities.

We invite you to join us and become a sponsor in honoring our past while strengthening our programs for the future, as we can continue making a meaningful difference for the hearing loss communities we serve.

For sponsorship information, please access the link on our [website](#).

MEETING NOTES: *"The Interconnection of the Ear, Nose, and Throat: Gaining A Better Understanding of ENT through Research"*

At our June 13, 2026 HLAA-East Bay Chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Meera Kohli, who is a Clinical Research Coordinator (CRC) at the UCSF Voice & Swallowing Center. Working closely with Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) physicians, researchers, and patients in both clinical and research settings, Meera supports clinical studies focused on disorders of throat, voice, and swallowing.

Meera discussed some of the ways that the ear, nose, and throat systems are interconnected, and in particular, how throat, swallowing, and upper airway conditions can sometimes relate to ear symptoms, such as pressure, discomfort, balance changes, and hearing concerns. Meera also shared an overview of some of the clinical research projects currently being conducted at UCSF related to voice and swallowing disorders as they impact hearing issues.



- I **What Does Meera Do as a Clinical Research Coordinator (CRC)?** Meera identified her major CRC responsibilities:
 - ✓ Coordinates clinical research studies.
 - ✓ Consults with patients with voice & swallowing disorders.
 - ✓ Collaborates with physicians, SLPs, & researchers.
 - ✓ Translates research into improved patient care & quality of life.

- I **What Is the Role of Clinical Research?** Clinical research focuses on understanding disease mechanisms, determining diagnosis, developing treatments, preventing disease, and improving the overall quality of life through studies involving human participants. While laboratory research often serves as the foundation for scientific discovery, clinical research helps to determine how those discoveries can be applied to patient care.

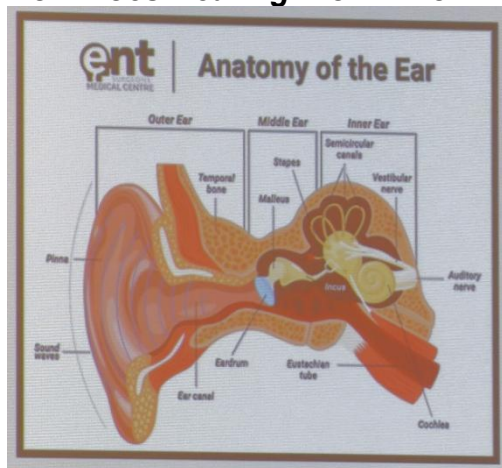
Many medical advances that are now considered routine---including hearing aids, medications, surgical procedures, and rehabilitation therapies---became available after years of careful research and testing. Clinical studies may investigate new treatments, compare existing therapies, evaluate patient outcomes, or examine how medical conditions affect quality of life. Every study contributes valuable information that helps healthcare providers make evidence-based decisions and improve care for current and future patients.

- I **What Are the Steps in the Clinical Trial Approval Process?** Research often begins with laboratory studies, where scientists investigate disease and identify potential therapies. Then clinical trials follow, generally occurring in several phases.
 - ✓ **Discovery:** Developing a new treatment is a lengthy discovery process designed to ensure safety and effectiveness.
 - ✓ **Preclinical Research:** Promising discoveries then move into preclinical research before progressing to human trials.
 - ✓ **Phase I:** Evaluates safety and appropriate.
 - ✓ **Phase II:** Examines effectiveness while continuing to monitor safety.
 - ✓ **Phase III:** Involves larger groups of patients and compares treatment results.
 - ✓ **FDA Review and Approval:** Regulatory agencies review the evidence before determining whether a treatment can be approved for public use.
 - ✓ **Post-Market Safety Monitoring:** Ongoing evaluation continues after FDA approval. The entire process frequently takes 10 to 15 years or more, but it helps to ensure that new treatments meet rigorous standards before reaching patients.

- I **What Is Included in the ENT Neighborhood?** One helpful way to think about the ear, nose, mouth, throat, and Eustachian tube is as neighbors living on the same street. Because these

structures are located close together and share important anatomical connections, symptoms often overlap. A problem in one area may influence another, making diagnosis more challenging than it initially appears. For example, many people experience ear pressure or muffled hearing during a cold. Although the symptoms may seem related solely to the ear, they are often connected to congestion affecting structures in the nose and throat. This overlap explains why ENT evaluations generally involve examining multiple structures rather than focusing on a single symptom.

How Does Hearing Work? How Does Sound Travel? Meera showed a picture of the ear and its parts as she described how hearing works: Pinna, Auditory Canal, Eardrum, Malleus, Incus, Stapes, Oval Window, Cochlea, Auditory Nerve, Brain.



✓ Hearing begins when sound waves enter the outer ear and travel through the ear canal to the eardrum.

✓ The eardrum vibrates in response to sound and transfers those vibrations to the 3 tiny bones located in the middle ear: malleus; incus; stapes. These are the smallest bones in the body.

✓ The vibrations then travel to the cochlea, a spiral-shaped structure in the inner ear. Inside the cochlea, thousands of specialized sensory hair cells convert mechanical vibrations into electrical signals.

✓ The electrical signals travel through the auditory nerve to the brain, where they are then interpreted as meaningful sounds.

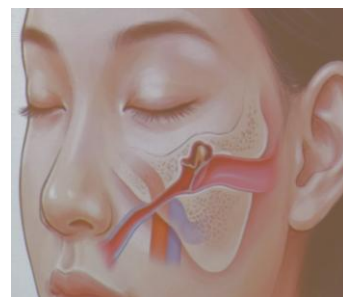
✓ Hearing loss can occur when any part of this pathway is disrupted. Some forms of hearing loss result from blocked sound transmission, while others occur when delicate hair cells in the cochlea become damaged due to aging, noise exposure, illness, or certain medications.

✓ In cases of severe sensorineural hearing loss, cochlear implants may help by bypassing damaged hair cells and directly stimulating the hearing nerve.

What Is the Eustachian Tube? The Eustachian Tube is an important link between the ear and throat. This narrow passageway connects the middle ear to the back of the nose and the upper throat.

✓ **Its primary functions include:**

- Equalizing pressure within the ear.
- Draining fluid from the middle ear.
- Protecting the ear from infection.



✓ **When the Eustachian Tube does not function properly, patients may experience:**

- Ear pressure.
- Ear fullness.
- Popping sensations.
- Muffled hearing.

| **Why Do Ears Pop on an Airplane?** Have you ever noticed your ears pop on an airplane?

- ✓ The middle ear is connected to the back of the throat by the Eustachian Tube.
- ✓ Changes in altitude cause changes in surrounding air pressure.
- ✓ Swallowing, chewing gum, or yawning helps open the Eustachian Tube.
- ✓ This allows pressure to equalize and often causes the familiar “pop”.
- ✓ The throat and ear are physically connected, whereas muscles in the throat help regulate pressure within the ears.
- ✓ Hence, many symptoms may overlap:
 - Ear pressure.
 - Ear pain.
 - Dizziness.
 - Difficulty swallowing.
 - Hoarseness.
 - Chronic throat clearing.
 - Chronic cough.

| **What Are the Main Functions of the Throat?** The throat performs 3 essential functions throughout daily life and require constant, precise coordination among muscles, nerves, and surrounding structures:

- ✓ **Breathing:** The throat serves as a passageway that allows air to travel between the nose, mouth, and lungs.
- ✓ **Speaking:** The voice is produced when air from the lungs passes through the vocal folds, causing them to vibrate.
- ✓ **Swallowing:** Swallowing moves food and liquids safely from the mouth into the esophagus while protecting the airway.

| **How Is Voice Produced?** Meera had us hum for a few seconds.

- ✓ Voice production begins with airflow from the lungs.
- ✓ As air passes through the vocal folds, they vibrate rapidly and create sound.
- ✓ That sound is then shaped and amplified as it resonates through the throat, mouth, and nose.
- ✓ The process is often compared to a musical instrument. Just as a guitar string vibrates to create sound, the vocal folds vibrate to produce the human voice.
- ✓ Small changes affecting the vocal folds can alter voice quality, making communication more difficult and affecting daily life in various ways.

| **Why Do Throat Conditions Cause Ear Symptoms?** The relationship between ear and throat extends beyond physical connections.

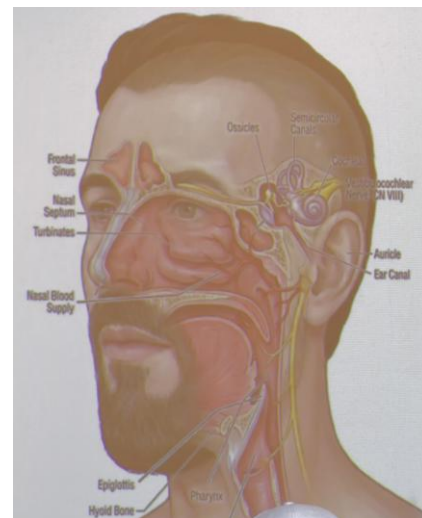
- ✓ Referred sensations occur because the ear and throat share certain nerve pathways.
- ✓ For example, strep throat can cause ear pain. Because the brain receives sensory information from overlapping regions, irritation originating in the throat can sometimes be perceived as ear discomfort. This phenomenon, known as referred pain or referred sensation, helps explain why

some patients experience ear pain even when their ears appear completely normal during examination.

- ✓ Understanding these shared pathways is an important part of diagnosing symptoms accurately.

- | **Why Look at the Whole System?** The ear, throat, voice, and swallowing systems are so closely connected. Therefore, healthcare providers often take a comprehensive approach when evaluating symptoms since the goal is to understand how the entire system functions rather than focusing on a single structure in isolation. A patient visit may involve:

- ✓ Ear examination.
- ✓ Nasal examination.
- ✓ Throat examination.
- ✓ Voice assessment.
- ✓ Swallowing evaluation.



- | **Why Do These Connections Matter?** The ear, throat, voice, and swallowing systems support many daily functions.

- ✓ These interconnected systems support common activities which individuals perform every day without much thought. These activities range from hearing conversations and speaking with others to swallowing food and regulating ear pressure during travel.
- ✓ Although these structures are often discussed separately, they function as an interconnected network. Recognizing these relationships helps clinicians diagnose symptoms more accurately and develop effective treatment plans.

- | **Clinical Research Projects at UCSF:** Before wrapping up, Meera proceeded to describe a couple of the clinical research studies at UCSF in which she has been directly involved as she carried out her Clinical Research Coordinator responsibilities:

- ✓ A study of how radiation therapy for throat cancer can affect hearing and balance,
- ✓ A quality-of-life study using stem cell clinical trials for treating patients with dysphagia (swallowing difficulties) following radiation therapy.

- | **Wrap-Up:** In wrapping up her excellent presentation, our speaker Meera Kohli reminded us that clinical research continues to expand our understanding of the interconnections of the Ear, Nose, and Throat (ENT) systems and their interactions, leading to improvements in diagnosis, treatment, and patient care. As knowledge continues to grow from clinical research studies, so does the ability to help individuals maintain communication, hearing, swallowing, and overall quality of life.

In the time remaining, Meera opened up the discussion for comments and questions from the audience. She also encouraged audience members to contact her if they want more information or have questions about any of the topics discussed today.

Finally, our 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 or Questions: Contact Meera by emailing her at meerakohli776@gmail.com.

~ Kathy Fairbanks

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Bring a check to the next meeting or go to
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info@hearinglosseb.org

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.

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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.