

The Irish Hard of Hearing Association

HEARSAY!

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. CHY. 10529



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Vol 13. No.1 Spring 2010

Newsletter for the Hard of Hearing

PRESIDENTS ADDRESS

I'm writing this on a cold morning in early February. There has been a lot of bad news as we move from 2009 into 2010. Several people have had their homes flooded or have been isolated because of snow. We have the ongoing lengthening of the unemployment queues. The Swine flu is still about. We have witnessed one of the greatest natural disasters in Haiti. All this bad news has had one positive impact on me. I have been so distracted I have almost forgotten I can't hear well!

This year the HSE are conducting a major review of Audiology Services. This review is quite broad. We have made an initial submission but will be inputting more later on. Please write or email me with your good and bad experiences. Did you have to wait too long? Did you come away with a better understanding of what happened your hearing and the options available to you. Any views you would like to air will help me hugely.

Hearing aids (analogue only, though that is being reviewed) supplied freely to medical card holders are not good enough for many people. Buying hearing aids cost a lot of money in Ireland. You may have noticed that a price war has started between some of the hearing aid suppliers. My message is shop around (but make sure your supplier has a good after sales repair services). Get a no obligation 3 or 4 week trial. Do not pay extra for loop or directional functionality. A lot of us will buy new aids this year; let's use our collective consumer strength.

Enjoy the spring

Michael Tighe

2010 IHHA AGM

This year's AGM will be on Sunday April 18th at 3pm in Elm Park golf club in Dublin.

We will let you know what has happened over the last year and set out our future plans. It is an opportunity to raise issues of importance to you and influence the direction of the organisation.

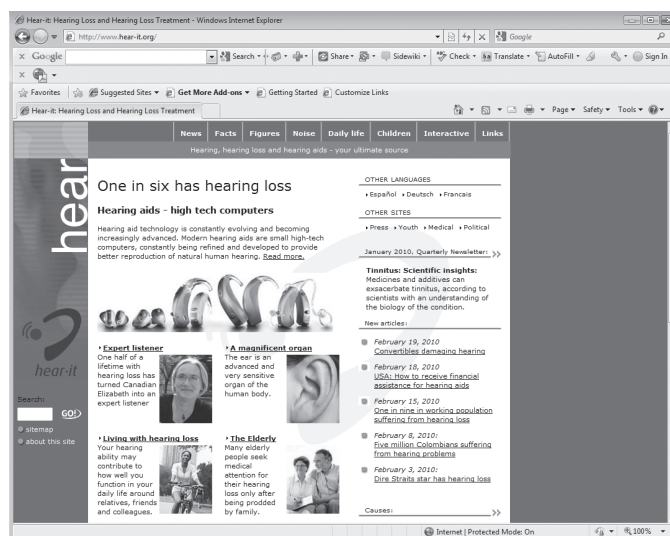
Apart from the formal meeting, we hope to have a lively discussion on Activities. We want member's input on the type of activities we might promote over the coming year. We can discuss the amount and variety of activities. We can discuss the location. (How about some non-Dublin ones?). What is your view on the need to have a mix of people with poor and normal hearing? Would you like to help organise an activity?

READ MY LIPS

Are computers really better than humans when it comes to lip reading? A lip reading machine has now been developed by researchers at the University of East Anglia, it has a success rate of 80% - a huge improvement on human lip readers, who only managed 32%.

They also found by using video based training rather than the traditional static pictures, it was easier to teach people how to lip read one syllable words — the most difficult to grasp. The findings could lead to new methods of training for those with a hearing loss.

Jacqueline



<http://www.hear-it.org/>

FACEBOOK

"For the young or those of us who pretend to be!"

Two Facebook groups have been established to bring more attention to hearing loss. "Leading a good life with my hearing loss!" is a group for those who know that hearing impaired people, too, can live life to the fullest. This group also wants to spread the word that lots of people are hearing impaired. The other group "My hearing may be damaged – but my social skills aren't" mainly targets young people with hearing loss. The message from this group is, "Yes, I have a hearing loss, but I'm enjoying life, I'm not embarrassed about my hearing loss – it's just one of my conditions in life."

Both Facebook groups feature debates, members posting messages and comments on the wall and the latest news from www.hear-it.org. The groups also support <http://www.hear-it.org/> and www.youth.hear-it.org

TV or NOT TV

It was useless, a losing battle! Normally with my T Switch I can happily follow what is being said on TV, but with an ear infection my hearing dropped to nearly zero - it was impossible I gave it up as a lost cause and switched to subtitles. Whereupon I made some dramatic discoveries, like the subtitles depended on the weather, especially for "foreign" stations. If it snows, hails, or blows a storm, you may give it up.

If the programmes are pre-recorded, or like the news, have a script the subtitles are fine, no problem. However on the programmes live on the air, people being interviewed, chat shows etc, the funniest things and the strangest spellings appear. On ITV Engelbert Humperdinck became encl Bert humper distinct and BBC News said John McCain was 672 years old and peters out turned into Pierre Out.

There are other times they suddenly disappear entirely for no visible reason and you are left wondering what happened next or "who done it" if you happened to be watching a play.

The people who operate these subtitles have my greatest admiration, I do not know sometimes how they keep up with the speaker, but they do. Sometimes words get written up by sound rather than the actual spelling, but then when you think of the English language it is extremely difficult and names particularly. Take Mohatma Ghandi it became "my hammock man gandi".

I think a big vote of thanks is due to the people who subtitle our programmes, there is no way we could enjoy TV without them.

Jacquie

REAL EAR MEASUREMENTS

The term real ear measurement (REM) is used by audiologists to cover a range of different measurements of the real-ear acoustical characteristics of hearing aids. The use of REM's in clinical audiology is to compare and verify the real-ear acoustical characteristics of a hearing aid with a prescription target. It is the only way to view the actual performance of a hearing aid and ear mould on a particular patient.

As part of the implementation of digital aids by the HSE, it has been recommended that REM's be performed by all clinicians. There are many advantages to using REM's in the fitting process e.g. patient benefit if targets are well matched and it provides confirmation that the target has been implemented by the hearing aid software. Some hearing aid dispensers have a 'click and fit' approach where the audiogram is entered into the hearing aid software and the company's own targets are set for the hearing aid, when REM's are not performed there is no way of confirming if the aid is reaching the targets requires by the client for his/her hearing loss.

Adults and children require different approaches when it comes to verifying performance of aids due to the difference between the acoustics of adult and children ear canals that impact on both audiometric data and on hearing aid amplification.

It is advisable that when purchasing a hearing aid privately that you request that REM's are performed as this ensures targets are matched and verifies that the mould is fitting correctly and the aid is programmed for your hearing needs.

Maria O'Brien, Audiologist, HSE

OUTSIDE THE BOX

I was listening to R.T.E. Radio the other evening and a programme came on called "Outside the Box". It is a programme for and about people with disabilities. To my utter delight this particular evening they were discussing hearing loss. I was thrilled when Ken, Diana Brigid and Carol came on and told us about their hearing loss and how they coped with it. I was absolutely fascinated; it cannot be an easy thing to do over the airways.

Not only that programme, but Ken also has written a book about hearing loss, it is in the shops now. A small book in size, but huge in the information it contains. An absolute necessity for anyone with a hearing loss. It is written with a lovely sense of humour too. It is called "Living with a Hearing Loss" and can be obtained in Easons, Waterstones or Hughes and Hughes.

Ken and Diana are Founder Members of our association and I think we owe them a great big vote of thanks not only for the Radio Programme and the book, but for our entire association.

Mary

Hearing is invisible as is music Living with someone without hearing An empty void of uncertain sounds

Each day is different, sometimes when I say something to my husband he understands immediately what I have said to him and other times not. Making myself clearly understood can depend on many factors, I could be in a hurry, more likely I'm forgetful i.e. I assume because I'm thinking of something I mistakenly assume I've already told him. He could be preoccupied about something else and not realise I've made an important statement, only that I have spoken to him, and might assume it wasn't very important and out of habit nod his head. I mistakenly assume he has heard each word that I have spoken and some hours later can discover that he had no idea that I had made an important statement.

It is not always apparent that we are not on the same wavelength. Ordinary every day communications e.g. arrangements for eating together or what we are doing and when, times of meetings elsewhere, when and where, likely time expected to be back etc. have to be addressed with care or it is very easy to be misunderstood completely sometimes causing chaos.

Before Ken and I got together I had lived independently for many years and was used to running my life in a spontaneous/unpredictable way, doing what I felt like depending on wherever I happened to be at a particular time. Being single I was beholden to no one. Nothing was planned. I found it very challenging having to tie myself down to what time I would be home in advance. Knowing it was essential to do so given that telephone communications were too much of a strain. Discussions to put things right via mobile phone or landline are simply not an option due to the poor clarity of diction on the telephone line and the possibility that there is background noise at the time of making the phone call. Nowadays this is not such a big deal as both of us have deepened our love and mutual respect for each other enabling both of us to make more and more mistakes than we ever did in our lives before and

it doesn't matter. We trust each other and I believe we genuinely make the best of our own sounds in uniquely different sorts of ways. Everything we interpret seems to go pear shaped and yet we somehow always manage to arrive at the same mutual conclusion which is a real godsend.

Historically I never wanted to have anything to do with anyone who had a hearing problem. Looking back I guess I just enjoyed having the monopoly on misery and didn't fancy taking on other peoples woes as well. I had never, but never, accepted my hearing limitations. It was a daunting task to embrace Ken's hearing loss. My greatest sadness living with Ken's hearing loss is the loneliness associated with loss of spontaneous exchanges between us ie, observation, humour, the trivia of anecdotal detail that embodies all of our lives with so much colour, energy and intrigue. The loss of that sense of immediacy or contact springing up between two people like the sudden burst of water gushing unexpectedly from a fountain never happens. The water has dried up. Sometimes, not always, a funny incident or perhaps a painful experience dies in the explaining, there is a delay positioning oneself in the optimum conditions, facial clues and speech evaporate if they are not delivered in a relaxed and easy manner that are clear to follow.

Diana

LASER TREATMENT

Recently, on a documentary programme on RTE called 'The Doctors', there was a piece about laser treatment for *Conductive* hearing loss. It seems this treatment can be successful in quite a lot of cases. I would really like to be able to tell you exactly what the doctor was saying but - guess what - I couldn't hear him!! RTE were not subtitled this wonderful programme at that time, though they are now, thank you RTE.

Unfortunately there was no mention of *Sensorineural* hearing loss, which is the kind I have. I don't know if this treatment is available in Ireland yet, but hopefully, it will be soon. Could the IHHA Council make inquiries about this?

If you have a computer you can see this episode of the programme if you type www.thedoctorstv.com/main/procedure_list/774 into the Google search engine, and if you have someone there with you who is lucky enough to have normal hearing they can tell you exactly what the doctor is saying.

Otolaryngologist (bit of a mouthful that) Dr Bob Owens demonstrates how a cutting-edge CO2 laser procedure can be used to repair conductive hearing loss.

Peter

MUSIC LINK!

Quite by chance a friend gently pushed me to try out a new gadget — a Music Link.

This is an easy to use device that works in conjunction with hearing aids with T Switches. It can be simply plugged into any radio, CD playing system or iPod.



The result is a sharper clarity of speech with a noticeable diminishment in the muffled background noise that normally detracts from the dialogue of clear speakers. The Music Link may make it worthwhile having a go, listening to some of your favourite radio programmes again.

The Music Link consists of a tiny plug, long lead and a semi-circular shaped hook. The hook sits comfortably on the ear lobe between your head and hearing aid. If the Music Link is plugged into the radio the output is transferred solely to the hearing aid user. It is also possible to turn up the volume on the radio without disturbing the neighbours!! Don't forget to make sure that you have turned the T Switch ON.

The Music Link costs €25 and can be purchased on-line, by post or calling in to the Technical Equipment shop in DeafHear, 35 North Frederick Street, Dublin 1.

OPERA AT THE CINEMA

I have always found that hearing music properly was difficult and I have had to rely on my memory to fill in any bits that I have missed. This meant that I had to choose very carefully any concerts that I went to.

I was certainly a little apprehensive when I learnt that our local cinema in Dun Laoghaire was screening operas beamed direct from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York direct by satellite. These were live operas coming direct to the local cinema. It sounded wonderful but at the same time I just did not know if I would be able to hear anything.

The first opera was Tosca and I went along to book, it was almost booked out but I managed to secure a seat in the front row, not the best. The manager happened to be beside the till when I was booking and I explained my position and he said that if there was a cancellation he would try to move me back a bit. Of course I did not believe a word of it.

I went along on the night and took my seat in the front row and before the performance started, the manager came along and moved me to a wonderful seat near the back where I could see properly. I could hardly believe it.

The opera was just wonderful. The performance was stunning and there were subtitles. Not only could I read what was being sung and follow the story perfectly, the sound was just stunning and although I did not know the opera very well, I was able to hear most of it.

There were two half hour intervals and they actually sold small bottles of wine. It was like being at the open house. It was just wonderful. I have booked up for all the operas that are coming. There will be nine this season. If you like opera, and even if your hearing is not great like mine, you can still enjoy a really wonderful night out.

Ken

WHAT NEXT?

If people living a couple of hundred years ago could see the world as it is today, they would not believe it, especially in regard to hearing. Years ago there was nothing, no hearing help of any kind — you just got left out and thought of as “a bit strange”. Of course the world was not such a noisy place then. Little or no traffic, no radios, or loud speakers either, so background sounds were kept to a minimum. Then some genius made a wonderful discovery, using a hollow horn shape device held up to one’s ear concentrated sounds enormously. I am glad to say we did not live in that age, but my first hearing aid was enormous by today’s standards, it was as large as my hand and had to clip on to a pocket with a wire going up to a rather large mould in my ear. I was so proud to be the owner of one; I could actually hear voices and things I had not heard for years.

Just recently I got a new digital hearing aid, a tiny little thing and so powerful; I could not believe it. Modern technology is really something - makes one wonder what is the next step in the hearing world?

Anne

LAUGH AND THE WORLD LAUGHS WITH YOU!

A week before Christmas two of us were going home on the bus after a delightful concert and a very noisy meal together. We neither of us hear too well and sitting either side of the aisle in the bus meant we had to raise the decibels to hear each other. After the usual chat of how many we were catering for and what sort of delicacies we were providing, the question of what time we were going to serve up the Christmas Dinner came.

The reply “**after the Queen’s Speech**” resulted in the whole bus giving us a standing ovation with much hilarity! Our conversation lessened after that as we realised we had been talking rather loudly. We were laughed at but were able to laugh with them – it was really very funny.

My friend left and I continued homewards. I was using walking sticks and got off the bus a little stiffly. As I continued up the road the bus cruised beside me and the driver opened the door and said “Can I take you a little further up the road missus?”

Well, I was overcome with gratitude. I was almost at my road but managed to tell him how much I appreciated his offer and to thank him and wish him a Merry Christmas. The sticks got more sympathy and concern than the hearing aids (which of course are invisible)!!

Both events made it a memorable evening and I returned home with a big smile on my face.

Millie

DORO MOBILE PHONES

Texting on mobile phones has been one of the best things to come on the scene in the last 20 years for hearing and hard of hearing people alike. However it doesn’t suit everybody due to small screens

and buttons or too many options. Now many large buttoned mobile phones are on sale that help hugely in this area. You can physically view this at any of the Deafhear resource centres around the country. You can buy them there or in many other places.

HOT WATER

For years now, we have had a disastrous electric kettle. It was shaped somewhat like a tall jug and every time you filled up a cup, water went everywhere else as well, no matter how careful you were. Not only that but it was terribly noisy as well and when the kettle was on, all conversation had to stop. Mind you it did boil up the water very quickly.

In the end, and I must say mainly because we were fed up getting wet feet, we decided to get a new one. We ended up with a new Kenwood silent rapid kettle which was more like an old fashioned kettle in shape. At last we can now hold a conversation when the kettle is boiling and it is just wonderful. I am sure there are other kinds of silent kettles on the market. But I haven’t experienced how silent they are. It does make things just that little bit easier when there is less noise about and you can hear others saying things to you. Not only that, we can now have a cup of tea without having to wear Wellington boots.

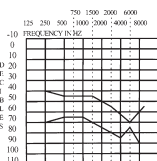
THAT SINKING FEELING

How often do we feel that our poor hearing is getting us down? We all have times when it seems just too much to get out and do things. Every now and again something comes along that gives us that little bit of a lift and gets us moving and excited again. A friend told us about an exhibition being held in Dublin of the Titanic artefacts. It sounded good to us, but I must admit I was a bit wary - I have been to exhibitions before. Along the way you could find out just what happened to the character you were given.

On the way in your photograph was taken and then you were left to your own devices. Everything was well documented although it was possible to hire a mobile commentary, but this was only really what was spelt out on posters and signs throughout.

The exhibition covered many rooms and spaces and took you through the construction of the ship, how it was run and the social life on board up to the time of the fatal accident with the iceberg. There were even subtle background sounds. When you were in the first class area, there was an orchestra playing just as the Titanic orchestra must have played. In the third class cabins, you could hear the sound of the engines. There were even mock ups of some of the rooms or cabins. All in all, it was truly great and perfect for anyone with a hearing loss to enjoy. On the way out you had the option to purchase your photograph which had been altered so that it appeared as if you were standing at the bottom of the great first class staircase with the captain. Do go to see it. It is well worth while. It is on at CityWest Event Centre, CityWest Hotel, City West until June 2010. Tickets € 18: concessions for OAP € 14.

Ken



Please note. Anyone who wants further information, contact the address below.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the IHHA.

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