

HEAR HEAR

M A G A Z I N E

• *The Bonnycastle Scholarship & Bursary Fund
is now accepting submissions*

• *Free Speech to Text
Google App: Live Transcribe*

SPRING
2020



Entendre Québec
Hear Québec

HEARHEAR

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A Word From the Executive Director



Heidi Wager

As we prepare to start a new year, let's take a look at our accomplishments over the last year. What an amazing year it was! We celebrated our 40th anniversary and continued to grow as an organization and make an impact with our members and the community. Here are some highlights:

- We launched a new digital information-sharing campaign on World Hearing Day, March 3rd, 2019.
- Through our Noise-Induced Hearing Loss Program we taught more than 2000 children, staff, and family members how to protect their hearing.
- We co-hosted the 2019 Canadian Hard of Hearing Association (CHHA) Educational Conference and Trade Show in Montreal, with people coming from across Canada to learn, socialize, and grow together. We sponsored 40 people from Hear Québec to attend all or part of the conference.
- We inaugurated our new name: ENTENDRE QUÉBEC/HEAR QUÉBEC.
- Along with the name change, we launched our new bilingual website and marketing materials.
- We organized the first ever fully-accessible comedy show in Montreal, a sold out event!
- We launched the Bonnycastle Scholarship and Bursary Fund to support the accessibility needs of people with hearing loss.
- We initiated a two-year campaign seeking 40 new monthly donors for our 40th anniversary to help ensure financial stability.
- We celebrated our 40 years with members, partners, the community, and volunteers at two special anniversary lunches in June and December. In addition, we created a special anniversary edition of our **HEARHEAR** Magazine.

As we reflected on the past 40 years, we have also been thinking about our future. We are starting a formal strategic planning process that will assist us in planning our future direction by setting strategic goals and determining actions to achieve these goals. We will develop tools to enable us to evaluate our progress and our intended impact. We will be turning to you, our members, throughout the year for your comments and opinions. It is very important that we consider your input while making decisions about the future of Hear Québec.

None of these events, activities, updates or programs would have been possible without the support, dedication and devotion of staff, volunteers, donors and members. I feel so proud to be a part of this team and so very blessed to have the support of such amazing, generous donors. **THANK YOU.**



Comedy for a Cause



40th anniversary cakes by Martha Perusse



CHHA Conference in Montreal

FYI:

What is Ménière's Disease?

Ménière's disease is a vestibular (inner ear) disorder characterized by symptoms of vertigo (severe dizziness), tinnitus (ringing in the ears), hearing loss, and aural fullness. These symptoms are the result of an abnormally large buildup of fluid in the parts of the inner ear, called the labyrinth. The organs of balance (the semicircular canals and otolithic organs) and of hearing (the cochlea) are contained in the labyrinth, which has two sections: the bony labyrinth and the membranous labyrinth. The membranous labyrinth is part of the balance organs and contains a fluid called endolymph that stimulates receptors as the body moves. These receptors send signals to the brain regarding the body's position and movement. Within the cochlea, fluid is compressed in response to sound vibrations, stimulating sensory cells that send signals to the brain. In Ménière's disease, the

endolymph buildup in the labyrinth interferes with the normal balance and hearing signals between the inner ear and the brain. This abnormality causes vertigo and other symptoms associated with the disease.

There is a high tendency of periods of natural remission for Ménière's disease, although the effects can be lifelong. Typically affecting only one ear, tinnitus and sensorineural hearing loss associated with the disease will persist while other symptoms subside. Those with Ménière's suffer from sudden bouts of intense dizziness which are typically characterized as "vertigo attacks." The attacks can happen in clusters over several days or as singular episodes with long periods of time in between.



Approximately
1 in 1000, or
35,000
Canadians experience
Ménière's Disease.

Ménière's disease can develop at any age, but it is more likely to happen to adults between 40 and 60 years of age. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) estimates that approximately **615,000** individuals in the United States are currently diagnosed with Ménière's disease and that **45,500** new cases are diagnosed each year.

615,000

Currently there is no direct cause identified for Ménière's disease. There are theories that the disease is a result of viral infections, allergies, autoimmune reactions, genetics, or constriction of blood vessels similar to those that cause migraine headaches. Likewise, there is no definite cure for Ménière's, but several treatment options are commonly suggested to help lessen the symptoms experienced. Medications for the dizziness caused by Ménière's can be prescribed, as can diuretics, which are thought to help decrease dizziness by lessening the fluid volume and pressure in the inner ear. Injections into the middle ear of the antibiotic gentamicin or a corticosteroid can help control vertigo, although gentamicin can

also damage the hair cells in the inner ear thereby increasing the risk of hearing loss. When all other treatments have failed to ameliorate vertigo, surgery to decompress the endolymphatic sac or to cut the vestibular nerve can be performed.

The unpredictable and incurable nature of Ménière's can make it difficult to cope with the disease. Those with the disease must educate themselves and those around them about how the disease impacts their life. It is important to communicate what might be needed when a vertigo attack strikes and how others can help.

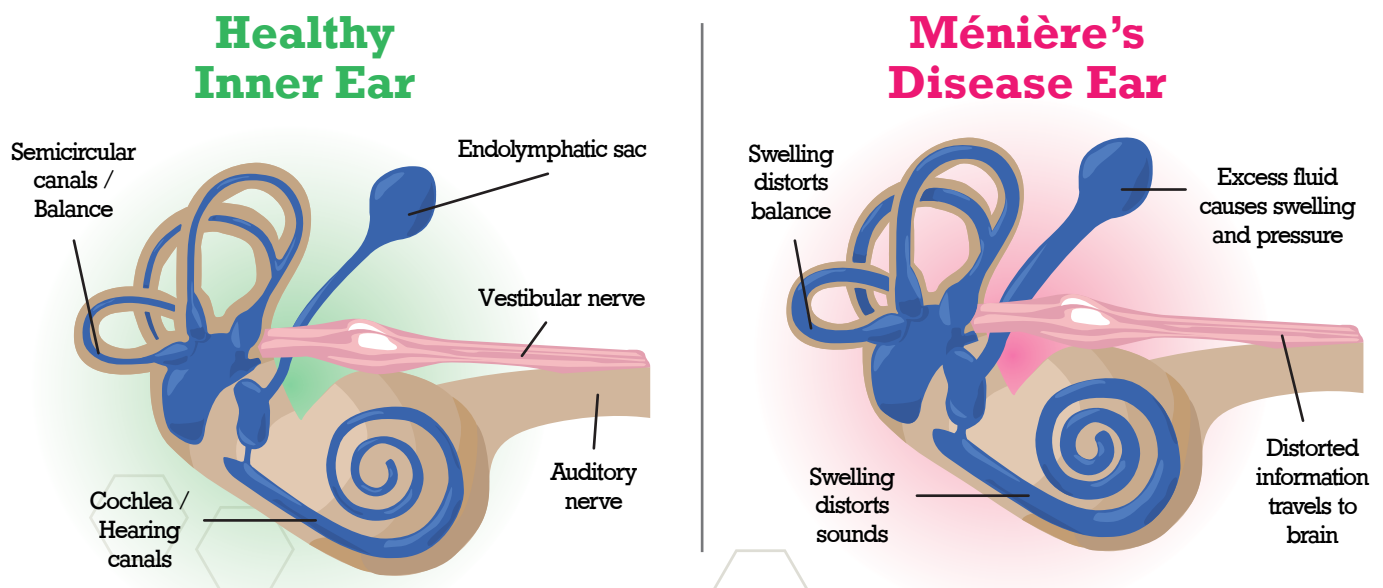


Figure courtesy of the Vestibular Disorders Association (vestibular.org)

Sources:

<http://canadianaudiologist.ca/an-update-on-menieres-disease/>
<https://vestibular.org/menieres-disease>
<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/menieres-disease>

Official Launch of The Bonnycastle Scholarship & Bursary Fund



The Bonnycastle Scholarship and Bursary Fund was established by Hear Québec to honour Dale Bonnycastle, one of the founding members of the organization. Dale continues to be an active volunteer at the organization and sits on the board of directors as vice-president. As a retired audiologist, Dale knows very well that untreated hearing loss can cause more than just an inability to hear; untreated, hearing loss can have severe social and emotional consequences including depression, isolation, and loneliness. The Bonnycastle Scholarship and Bursary Fund will assist a person with hearing loss (hard of hearing, oral deaf or late-deafened) with the acquisition of an assistive device or service that will enhance accessibility in their environment. The assistive device or service may be required for a number of reasons: to enhance communication, to enable the pursuit of studies, to integrate into social/educational or other activities, and for increased safety.

Eligibility Criteria:

1. Applicant is a member of Hear Québec;
2. Applicant is 16 years or older;
3. Applicant is a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* or a Registered Indian under the *Indian Act*;
4. Applicant uses spoken language as a primary means of communication;
5. Applicant is experiencing financial hardship;
6. Applicant is not eligible for this assistance under any other program (e.g. RAMQ/Québec Health Insurance);
7. Priority will be given to the English-speaking community

Application Procedure:

The deadline for applications is 5 pm on April 17th, 2020 with a decision announced at our Annual General Meeting. The application must include:

1. A completed application form which can be downloaded here <https://hearhear.org/scholarships-and-bursaries/> or obtained from the office.
2. A recent audiogram (within one year) with a written audiological report.
3. Consent to a financial evaluation (documentary proof of financial status).
4. A written explanation of no more than 800 words detailing the reasons for applying and the desired impact the device or service will have on your life. **Hearing health professionals are encouraged to support and assist in the application procedure.**

For more information, visit the website: <https://hearhear.org/scholarships-and-bursaries/>, email Dale at daleb@hearhear.org, or you may call the office at 514-488-5552 ext 4500.

In Loving Memory



Bob Johnstone



Lou Brock



Marsha Gardner

We were very sorry to hear of the passing of three of Hear Québec's honoured members. **Robert Johnstone** joined CHIP (now Hear Québec) many years ago and served many functions over the years, most recently as the moderator at our Annual General Meetings. Bob was always a great supporter of CHIP. "What I'm looking for in my life," he said, "I found it in CHIP." **Lou Brock** also had fond memories of CHIP. The work that Lou most remembered doing for CHIP was working with Alvin Goldman on weekly captioned movie screenings, organizing and hosting the evenings with films and refreshments. He always felt that CHIP was like family. "I was always looking forward to doing something for CHIP," he recalled in a recent interview. Both of these gentlemen who served among the founding members of CHIP will be remembered with fondness and deep appreciation for their generosity of spirit.

With **Marsha Gardner's** passing on November 11, we lost a good friend, colleague and great supporter of Hear Québec. Marsha was an audiologist who was devoted to her patients and to patient care. She helped thousands of people with hearing loss. Marsha was the first recipient of Hear Québec's Golden Ear Award. This award recognizes hearing health professionals for their devotion and service to others as well as their dedication and support of our mission. Her warmth and professionalism will always be remembered.



Membership & Registration

Return all forms by mail, email, or in person to the Hear Québec office with payment. You can also download these forms on our website: www.hearhear.org.

Annual Membership is valid between April 1 and March 31 of each year and must be renewed annually. Hear Québec members have the right to vote at our Annual General Meeting, receive our printed bi-annual **HEARHEAR** Magazine, and are eligible to participate in our programs and services. Membership is extended to people affected by hearing loss, hearing health professionals, or anyone who supports our mission. Please complete **both sides** of the enclosed 2020-21 membership form. If you are a veteran, actively serving, or a student aged 16-18, your membership is free!

Registration is mandatory for all programs, events, and services. Please register prior to your activity and not on the starting day.

Please inform us in advance if you need an assistive listening device or any other accommodations for our programs or events and we will try to accommodate your specific needs.

Payment Methods: You can pay by cash, cheque, credit card, or debit card at the office. Please make cheques payable to **Hear Québec**. You may also make secure payments or donations online at: <https://hearhear.nationbuilder.com/donate>

Accessibility: All programs, events, and activities will be accessible for those with hearing loss. This can include sound amplification, FM systems, or Live Transcribe. If you feel you need further accommodations please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate your needs.

**If there is a concern due to financial hardship, please contact the Executive Director at heidywager@hearhear.org or call 514-488-5552 ext. 4500.*

Spring Programs 2020

Speechreading (Lipreading): Without knowing, most individuals with hearing loss will speechread to some extent, unaware that it is a skill that can be learned and developed. We offer Speechreading Beginners and Plus classes in NDG and the West Island. Please see page 10 for our spring schedule.



Outreach: Hear Québec offers presentations to community groups and organizations in Montreal and the surrounding area. This information-sharing activity focuses on the signs of hearing loss, pathways to services and communication strategies.

Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) Program: The NIHL Program aims to promote awareness about NIHL through play. This recreational harm reduction program is designed to teach participants about sound, the ear, the causes and consequences of NIHL, and most importantly how to prevent it. The presentations can be delivered to classrooms, after-school programs, and community recreational groups for children aged 8-12.



Lily Bernstein Program (LBP): The LBP offers many activities (accessible outings, events and **HEARTalks**) and services (support and referral) aimed at improving the lives of those affected by hearing loss. This spring we are focusing on a series of workshops called the **HEARTalk** Wellness Series. Please see pages 9-11 for a list of events.

****For more information about any of our programs, events and services, or if you would like to book a presentation, please email info@hearhear.org or call our office at 514-488-5552 ext. 4500.**

Spring Events 2020

(Members' friends and family are welcomed and encouraged to participate in our events)

HEARTalk Wellness Series

We often see hearing loss take a toll on other aspects of life and not just the obvious communication difficulties. Needless to say, this can have a detrimental effect on mental health which, in turn, can lead to a decline in physical health too. In view of this, we would like to present the **HEARTalk** Wellness Series – a 5 part wellness series that will bring some of the best in this field to you! These **HEARTalks** are designed to empower our members to take control of all aspects of their well-being.

HEARTalk Wellness Series: *Putting Self Care First*

Learn about the importance of putting yourself first. Martha Perusse (Professional and Personal Coach and President of the Board at Hear Québec), presented this talk at the 2019 CHHA conference. (Registration deadline: April 13th)



Date: April 20th Time: 1 pm - 2:30 pm Place: Room C234, 7010 Sherbrooke Street West

HEARTalk Wellness Series: *Taking Care of Your Physical Health*

Representatives from the Concordia University PERFORM Centre will present the benefits of exercising on general wellbeing. They will also highlight their seniors programs. (Registration deadline: April 20th)



*Includes a personal anecdote from Dale Bonnycastle, a user of the PERFORM Centre.

Date: April 27th Time: 1 pm - 2:30 pm Place: Room C234, 7010 Sherbrooke Street West

HEARTalk Wellness Series: *Taking Care of Your Hearing Health*

Would you like to know more about hearing loss and how to properly manage it? Audiologist Dana Manolache will be highlighting what to expect at your hearing test, how often you should get tested and the questions you should ask your audiologist. (Registration deadline: May 6th)



Date: May 13th Time: 6 pm - 8 pm
Place: Room C234, 7010 Sherbrooke Street West

HEARTalk Wellness Series: *Hearing Loss Technology*

Would you like to learn more about hearing aids and assistive listening devices (ALDs)? Having the proper hearing devices can improve your wellbeing significantly. An acoustician will be giving a presentation about hearing aids that will be followed by a discussion about ALDs.



Date: July TBA Time: TBD
Place: NDG - Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre

AGM: Members are invited to attend Hear Québec's Annual General Meeting (AGM). Dinner will be served, followed by an award ceremony and overview of the year. As part of our **HEAR**Talk Wellness Series, this year our AGM will feature a special presentation by **Doctor Henry Olders**. In his talk, *Henry's Life Cookbook: easy, tested recipes for health and happiness*, Dr. Olders will highlight various ways we can age well.

Accessibility: Deadline to request ASL is May 20th.

Date: June 3rd, 2020 Time: 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm (Doors open at 5 pm for registration)

Place: Layton Hall (7010 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal)

Cost: A suggested donation of \$15



New

The Way We "HEAR"

Telling our stories through art and written expression

Board Member **Katrina Tarondo** has created a photography project with members like you! This photo series will showcase hearing loss through portraits and personal stories – a beautiful and creative way of illustrating the impact of hearing loss. This project is an extension of our social media series Humans of Hear.

More information will be sent to members by email the week of March 15th. If you are interested in participating or you would like more information, please contact Katrina Tarondo at katrinatarondo@hearhear.org or Abby Stonehouse at abbystonehouse@hearhear.org. Registration deadline is March 27th, 2020. **Photos and stories will be displayed at this year's AGM.**



SPEECHREADING (Lipreading)

NDG

Layton-Lethbridge-Mackay Rehabilitation Centre
7010 Sherbrooke St. West, Montreal
Session Fees: \$25

Speechreading Beginners (Room C234)

Tuesdays, 1 pm - 3 pm

March 31st - June 2nd

Speechreading PLUS (Room C234)

Thursdays, 1 pm - 3 pm

April 2nd - June 11th (No class on April 9th - Passover)

\$25
for 10
sessions

DORVAL

Sarto Desnoyers Community Centre
1335 Lakeshore Dr, Dorval
Session Fees: \$25

Speechreading PLUS (Room 202)

Wednesdays, 1 pm - 3 pm

April 1st - June 10th

(No class on June 3rd - AGM)

*June 10th class will be held in

Room 204 due to a scheduling conflict



KIRKLAND

Chartwell Manoir Kirkland
2 Canvin St, Kirkland
Session Fees: \$25

Speechreading Beginners (Conference room)

Fridays, 10 am - 12 pm

April 3rd - June 5th



Important Dates

March

World Hearing Day

- March 1st, 2020 - Program & Activity Registration Open
- March 3rd, 2020 - World Hearing Day
- March 31st, 2020 - Speechreading classes start

April

Volunteer Appreciation Week

- April 10th, 2020 - Good Friday/Office Closed
- April 13th, 2020 - Easter Monday/Office Open
- April 19th - 25th, 2020 - Volunteer Appreciation Week
- April 20th, 2020 - **HEARTalk Wellness Series: Putting Self Care First**
- April 27th, 2020 - **HEARTalk Wellness Series: Taking Care of Your Physical Health**

May

May Hearing Month

- May 5th, 2020 - Journée National de l'Audition
- May 13th, 2020 - **HEARTalk Wellness Series: Taking Care of Your Hearing Health**
- May 18th, 2020 - Victoria Day/Office Closed

National Accessibility Week May 31st - June 6th

June

- June 3rd, 2020 - **AGM/HEARTalk Wellness Series: Henry's Life Cookbook: easy, tested recipes for health and happiness**
- June 18th - 22nd, 2020 - HLAA2020 Convention in New Orleans (Hearing Loss Association of America)
- June 24th, 2020 - Saint-Jean-Baptiste/Office Closed

July

- July 1st, 2020 - Canada Day/Office Closed
- TBD - **HEARTalk Wellness Series: Hearing Loss Technology**

APPOINTMENTS

My audiologist appointments

Date: _____

Note: _____

My acoustician appointments

Date: _____

Note: _____

BTW:
New

Free Speech to Text Google App: Live Transcribe



As a person with a profound hearing loss, I've always been notoriously shy. Unless I have a specific request or task to do, I'm helpless in communicating with people. For the longest time, I had oral interpreters, and never thought I'd have to face a time where I wouldn't always be able to rely on their presence to let me know what was being said.

When it comes to talking to complete strangers, I'm always intimidated because I never know for sure if I'll be able to understand the first words that come out of their mouths, let alone whether they speak English or not.

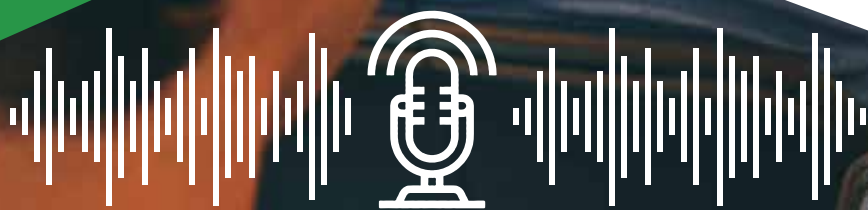
I've been waiting for the longest time for real-time captioning (where text would slowly reveal what reporters are saying during the news) to show up outside of TV, so I wouldn't have to try following snatches of conversations, flipping my head back and forth like a paddle ball on a string.

After a decade of stalled progress, that time has come.

There's an app called Live Transcribe that's available for Android phones. It can convert speech to text, showing what people say. It's all I've ever dreamed of and compared to other free apps on the market, it's really good. In fact, it's almost as good as a person doing real-time captioning!

Granted, the technology isn't exactly perfect, as some words tend to get garbled and misunderstood, and it's not great at filtering out background sounds in a crowded noisy environment, but it's a promising start. Hopefully future upgrades will be able to improve on these glaring flaws and fill in the gaps, including differentiating between who's talking and what background music is playing, but maybe that's a little too much to ask.

The app has an extra feature, a colourful box that pops up when a certain kind of background noise comes up. Some of these noise notifications include Traffic, Laughter, Barking, and the like. But like Live Transcribe, it sometimes has trouble telling the difference between various sounds. When I whistle, it thinks I'm a Singing Bird!





In the meantime, it comes in handy for understanding what's going on when people are talking to me, or when there are a few people engaged in conversation when I'm around. I can get the gist of their conversation without having to worry about jumping in and interrupting. And if I think of something I'd like to say, I can bring it up when I see an opening. Contributing what you know is a wonderful feeling.

An added bonus is that when I leave it in a room, it will retrieve all kinds of idle gossip spoken by people

who talk freely, never knowing that their conversation is being recorded. Then, when I come back into the room, I can easily catch up on their dialogue without having to ask them to go through the trouble of recapping what they've just talked about.

Just as hearing aids aren't miracle cures for being able to instantly hear everything, the Live Transcribe app isn't a miracle cure for hearing rapid conversations in a crowded room...yet.

Tips to use when using the app:

- A stand to rest your phone on is recommended. Preferably one that's attached to your cellphone holder.
- The size, dimension and colour of the text can be increased and adjusted to make it easier for you to read. Large, extra-large, white on black, or black on white.
- Limit the amount of background music/noise; it doesn't work as well if there's too much noise. This may "confuse" the app.
- It works better if there are not too many people talking. If possible, find a quieter place if you want to talk to a specific person.
- Ask people to speak slowly and clearly. Considering their natural speaking speed, this might be an uphill battle.

If you plan to attend meetings or lectures, you can purchase a mic that connects to your cellphone via Bluetooth. The mic can be given to one specific person, such as a teacher or speaker. If needed, the mic can be transferred to whoever's going to speak next.

Daniel Basch Tétreault

Daniel has been doing volunteer work at CHIP (now Hear Québec) for over 10 years. He was born deaf, with a profound hearing loss. In addition, it was later discovered that he has Asperger's. With a degree in library science, he maintains his comic blog and works on his Black Comedy WebNovel, [This Is They: the chronicles what it feels like to be a Deaf Aspergerian](#).



Q & A With Your Audiologists

By: Dana Manolache and Wendy Tat

Question: I would like to get a hearing test. Could you tell me about the advantages and disadvantages of having my test done in the private sector (as opposed to public)?

This is a good question and one many people ask us about. Whether it be for a hearing test or to get help for your tinnitus, vertigo, or other ear-related issues, the main advantage of consulting an audiologist in the private sector is the speed with which you can obtain an appointment. Hospitals usually have long waiting lists, whereas it is possible to get an appointment more quickly at most private clinics. This is particularly advantageous for people who are bothered by their hearing health issues, as it allows them to have quicker access to services and help in a timely manner. In addition, you do not need a medical referral to consult an audiologist in the private sector,

whereas a referral is necessary when consulting in the public sector. Some private clinics offer multidisciplinary services under the same roof (ENT doctors, audiologists, hearing aid acousticians), which is another advantage, since it reduces the client's travel and helps ensure more effective follow-ups.

Since the audiology services offered in private practice are not covered by Medicare, clients must pay out-of-pocket, which may be considered a disadvantage to some people. However, certain insurance plans cover audiology services, which may result in lower out-of-pocket fees for beneficiaries.

About us

Wendy and Dana are audiologists at Solutions Santé Westmount. They offer various services including hearing and communication needs assessment, and the evaluation of tinnitus, noise induced hearing loss, and other ear-related symptoms.

Dana Manolache



I became involved with Hear Québec during my first year as a student in Audiology at the University of Montréal. The experience I gained through volunteering at Hear Québec and at the Geriatric Institute of Montreal provided me with enriching perspectives on my profession. I firmly believe in the importance of offering my patients an environment of warmth, respect, understanding, transparency and communication.

DANA

Question: I scheduled my hearing test with an audiologist. What can I expect during my appointment?

When you first meet your audiologist, she/he will begin by asking you questions about any ear-related symptoms, like hearing loss, ear infections, ringing in the ears, dizziness or vertigo. You may also be asked about your history of noise exposure, your medical history or medications taken. It is not unusual to be asked questions about your general health as certain medical conditions and medications can put you at higher risk for hearing loss or other ear-related symptoms. Finally, your audiologist will ask specific questions about your ear-related difficulties and communication needs.

The next step of your consultation will involve a visual inspection of your ear canals to make sure they are free from wax or other obstructions that could have an impact on the test. Having some wax in your ears is normal, but when there is an excess amount present, it can block your ear canal and result in a temporary hearing loss. If your audiologist notices excess wax, she/he may remove it for you, or refer you to an Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) doctor to have it removed.

Once the visual inspection is complete, the audiologist will perform different tests to evaluate your middle ear and inner ear functions. These may include a pressure test to determine if your eardrum moves well, a tone test where you will be asked to press a button when you hear a sound, and a speech test where you will be asked to repeat words. Your audiologist may perform additional tests, depending on your difficulties, needs, and the reason for consultation.

Once the testing is complete, your audiologist will explain the results and make his/her recommendations. It is important to remember that two individuals with the same audiogram may have very different day-to-day difficulties. Therefore, your audiologist's recommendations will not only be based on the test results, but they will also be heavily influenced by your personal communication needs.

Wendy Tat



As well as being an audiologist, I am currently working as a researcher at the Research Center of the Geriatric Institute of Montreal (IUGM) on a video format training program on hearing aids and communication strategies to help healthcare professionals interact more efficiently with hearing-impaired patients. I strive to provide high quality services in a compassionate and comfortable environment.

WENDY

Question: My audiologist recommended hearing aids, but I'm not sure if I correctly understand the steps involved in obtaining them. How does it work exactly?

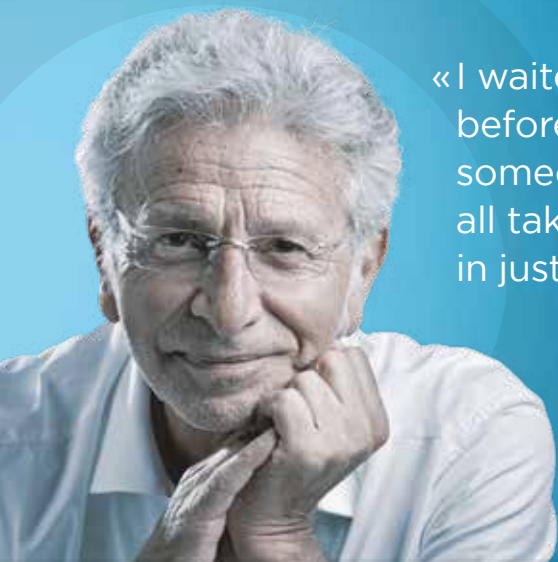
Once you have your hearing test results and your audiological report, you can obtain your hearing aids through the private sector by simply scheduling an appointment with the hearing aid acoustician of your choice.

Some clients are eligible to obtain one or two hearing aids through the RAMQ. Your audiologist will inform you if this is your case. The steps to obtain hearing aids through the RAMQ are the following:

1. Appointment in audiology for a hearing evaluation (you will be given an audiological report).
2. Appointment with an ENT doctor to obtain a medical certificate.
3. Appointment with an acoustician to obtain your hearing aids: it is very important to bring copies of your audiological report and ENT medical certificate to your acoustician.

Some clients are also eligible to obtain one or two hearing aids through the CNESST if their ear-related difficulties are related to their past or current work. The steps to obtain hearing aids through the CNESST are:

1. Appointment in audiology for a hearing evaluation (you will be given an audiological report).
2. Appointment with an ENT doctor to open a CNESST file if judged pertinent.
3. Fill out the Appendix to the Worker's Claim: Occupational Disease-Deafness and the Worker's Claim form and send them to the CNESST.
4. A letter will be sent to you by mail from the CNESST stating whether you are recognized as having an occupational hearing loss.
5. Appointment with an acoustician to obtain your hearing aids.



«I waited 10 years before seeing someone. It was all taken care of in just one call.»

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My Hearing Journey

By: Annalise Kluender



I was fortunate to grow up surrounded by a community of diverse abilities. My older brother, Kyle, was born with cerebral palsy. My neighbourhood best friend, Ryan, has a developmental disability. My aunt is a physical therapist and has a daughter not much older than me; she has a cochlear implant and uses American Sign Language (ASL).

Throughout my childhood, my brother and I participated in Wisconsin TOPSoccer (The Outreach Program for Soccer). TOPSoccer's goal is to enable the thousands of young athletes with disabilities to become valued and successful members of the US Youth Soccer family. My brother was a participant and I was a buddy. As a buddy, I assisted in weekly community-based soccer training partnering with athletes aged 8-19 who have mental or physical disabilities.

Kyle has been my best friend my entire life. Growing up, we did almost everything together. We played together and swam together. I stuck around during his weekly physical therapy sessions after his countless surgeries and every Sunday morning we would both partake in a therapeutic horseback riding session donning our Tweety Bird and Tasmanian Devil helmets.

Having close relationships with people who have disabilities helped me accept my hearing loss with ease. The biggest struggle was the period prior to the hearing loss. When I was about 13, I came down with Influenza B. Shortly after that, I began having random "attacks" of intense vertigo, followed by hours of nausea and vomiting until my body could bear no more. These attacks would strike any time, anywhere and the frequency of vertigo attacks also seemed random. Sometimes I would have a few a month, while at other times, they'd be months apart. My family struggled to find adequate help, taking me to specialist after specialist. I had acquired tinnitus in my right ear and it was determined that an inner ear issue must be at the root of the problem. I remember being prescribed diuretics, and even steroids, to try and ameliorate my inner ear issues. I had the option of having surgery to put steroids in my inner ear, but we decided it wasn't worth the risk.

Not knowing when the vertigo would strike caused me some anxiety. In a matter of seconds, I would go from completely fine to violently dizzy or ill, almost unable to move. My parents were very supportive and I was lucky to have them ready to quickly pick me up whenever and wherever I became sick.

Eventually doctors deduced that I had Ménière's disease. I presented the classic requirements for the disease: vertigo lasting more than 20 minutes, hearing loss on at least one occasion, and tinnitus. I don't remember when my hearing loss began, but I do remember the frustration of not knowing what was happening or how to proceed. Getting fitted for my first set of hearing aids was an exciting opportunity. There wasn't much I could do myself to improve my condition, but having a tangible solution for one of my Ménière's complications was monumental for me. At the time, I was told my type of hearing loss would be best aided by CROS hearing aids. I was maybe 15 at the time, and while I loved them at first, I wore them intermittently throughout high school before deciding that they weren't as helpful anymore.

I made it two years into university before attributing any of my academic struggles to my hearing loss. I hadn't been wearing my hearing aids but still made sure to sit in the very front. Despite this, there were a handful of professors that I simply could not understand. I would miss every third word of what they were saying and could in no way take proper notes. The moment of realization for me that I needed additional help was when I had to drop a class because I missed too much of what the professor said, and had no friends in the class to help me with notes.




I sought out support from the university's Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) and eventually managed to navigate the Canadian healthcare system and obtain a new hearing aid. The rest of my university time went well, hearing-wise, and I even became a note taker for the OSD. Socially, I've managed to adapt. My friends make sure they're not on my left side (bad side) when we're walking together and, when possible, to look at me when we're talking.

After university my biggest challenge became finding a job. I tried working as a server and hostess in a restaurant, but even on their quietest days, it was a struggle. I got a job at a depanneur, and while it was better than the restaurant, the background music and the continual loud chime of the door sometimes made hearing customers nearly impossible.

Navigating my Ménière's and hearing loss is a process that will continue to evolve for the rest of my life. Being diagnosed with Ménière's was a bit of a bumpy ride, but because of the diverse abilities within my close community, I was able to easily accept my hearing loss. There is always the possibility I could lose more hearing, but right now, I simply appreciate the hearing I have.

I recently celebrated my 24th birthday. My family lives back in the U.S., and for my birthday, I was surprised with a package in the mail. My father had sent me an American Girl doll, something I loved when I was a kid. They had historical dolls and "Truly Me" dolls, which are designed to have features matching the child that owns them. This doll was their special 2020 Girl of the Year, Joss Kendrick. Usually, as a 24-year-old, I wouldn't get excited about a doll – especially a doll that doesn't look like me at all. But this was different. This year, the Hearing Loss



A woman with blonde hair is smiling and looking down at a doll. The doll has long brown hair and is wearing a blue jacket and a hearing aid in its right ear. The background is a wooden wall.

Association of America and American Girl partnered together to increase education and awareness of hearing loss by making their 2020 Girl of the Year born with hearing loss and wearing a hearing aid in her right ear. I have hearing loss and I wear a hearing aid in my right ear! Our hearing aids match, our cases match, and our cleaning supplies match! When I was a child I could easily find a doll that had blonde hair and blue eyes like myself, and yet as an adult, somehow I became emotional over a doll that, at first glance, looked nothing like me.

I was extremely lucky as a kid to grow up in a community with all kinds of representations of lifestyles and abilities. I had other girls with hearing loss to look up to, and yet over a decade since my hearing loss was diagnosed (a hearing loss I didn't even have as a child), seeing a doll with a hearing aid was moving. Not everyone is able to have such a diverse representation of abilities in their life. Not every little child with hearing loss knows someone else in real life with hearing loss, or knows of a celebrity or TV character with hearing loss. Having a multinational company adding a small (literally, physically small) hearing aid to a doll is a huge gesture for a child with hearing loss – and, as it turns out, for a 24-year-old too!

Annalise Kluender is Hear Québec's newest employee and a recent graduate of McGill University with a degree in History and Political Science. Always on a quest to learn, Annalise is an avid reader and a true crime, political, and epidemiology podcast junkie.



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World Hearing Day

March 3rd, 2020

This is an international day to raise awareness about hearing loss. Last year, World Hearing Day provided Hear Québec the opportunity to raise almost \$1000 for our Noise-Induced Hearing Loss (NIHL) Program which allowed us to educate 1000 children about NIHL! Every dollar counts! This year, we are fundraising again and making this day even bigger than ever. Please follow us on Facebook and Instagram to be up-to-date on this event.

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