Beyond Technology: Aural Rehabilitation
By Lisa Illich, M.C.S.D., CCC-A

If you use hearing aids or have a cochlear implant (CI), you have experienced mixed results with your hearing instruments: they may help significantly, particularly in controlled situations where there is one person speaking at a time and very little background noise. But in an adverse listening environment, such as a noisy restaurant or social gathering, you quickly realize the limits of technology—you can hear, but you just can’t understand!

Or, if you have recently obtained hearing aids or a CI, everything now sounds different. It’s all louder, but not necessarily understandable. Your brain just doesn’t seem to comprehend the sounds it is hearing. This is where aural rehabilitation (AR) enters the picture. There are actions that can be taken beyond the reliance on technology to benefit from an improved quality of life.

If you have questions about HLAA-WA, please contact us at info@hearingloss-wa.org.
Communicating about Communicating

By Karen Utter, President of HLAA-WA

Couples are affected by lots of subtle impacts from hearing loss, but the hearing partner may be adversely affected in ways that are less obvious and just as profound. Sometimes a person who has hearing loss tells me their spouse or partner is doing ok...but what I often hear from the spouse or hearing partner is very different. Similar comments could be made about the impact on parents, siblings and other family members when someone in the family has hearing loss; but for purposes of this column I’ll focus on couples.

Many studies discuss the feelings of spouses and partners after their life partners are affected by hearing loss. The things that stand out for me about the feelings and views of hearing partners include:

- The hearing partner often experiences a wide range of emotions—ranging from empathy, concern and a desire to help, to frustration, resentment, and feeling imposed-upon or over-burdened;
- Changes in social life often are disappointing to the hearing partner;
- A hearing partner may less often initiate conversations with the partner that has hearing loss, or become irritated with the partner for missing things that they thought had been heard;
- If the hearing loss of a partner is severe, the hearing partner may just "take over." Sometimes with hearing loss, spousal roles even reverse;
- The hearing partner may feel conflicted when faced with choices: "Go out alone?" "Stay home?" Or, they may push the partner with hearing loss to go out, and then feel guilty for their own reactions or behavior.

What’s the right thing to do? Eventually, there may be significant grief for the hearing partner related to what has been lost. He or she may feel embarrassed by those feelings and eventually feel isolated and alone.

I don’t have all the answers. These are complex situations, affected by the nature of the couple’s relationship before hearing loss, individual personalities, and many other factors. But I do strongly encourage anyone who has a hearing loss to bring their hearing partner to a HLAA chapter meeting.

Attending together is a valuable sharing experience in itself. I strongly believe that both people in a couple need to understand hearing loss. At meetings, the hearing partner often learns more and is more surprised by information than the person with hearing loss. Hearing about the experiences of others at the meeting (and their wisdom), or from our featured meeting speaker, will be valuable to both members of the couple. Both need to learn all they can about what hearing loss really means, and all the ways available to manage the relationship changes brought on by hearing loss.

A long-time HLAA member recently introduced himself to our Seattle group by saying that he had lived with hearing loss for over 30 years. No, not his, but his wife’s! Only when he and his wife became active in a HLAA chapter

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did he learn and understand all that she had been dealing with. Together, they learned to communicate better with each other. He remarked that learning and understanding all she was dealing with was a “humbling experience.”

There are lots of ways to deal with hearing loss. Getting a hearing device can certainly be effective. Some people seek out education and understanding, learning communication strategies through Aural Rehabilitation programs. But simply attending HLAA meetings with your hearing partner can be a great step toward mutual understanding of hearing loss, and how it affects BOTH members of a couple. Please plan to join us at a local meeting near you!

Seen and Heard

HLAA-WA has learned that long-time member Janis Moore, of Olympia, passed away in May. Janis participated in HLAA meetings in southern Puget Sound, as well as in Bellevue and Everett. She is remembered for her tenacious and effective advocacy on behalf of people with hearing loss, including active participation as an advocate in many national and international gatherings related to hearing loss.

Alzheimer’s Disease Working Group

Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias impair memory, thought processes and functioning, primarily among older adults. These devastating diseases affect the individuals afflicted and their families. Recent research substantiates a connection between hearing loss and dementias, cognitive decline, and brain atrophy.

Governor Jay Inslee signed a bill in March 2014 authorizing development of an Alzheimer’s Disease Plan (ADP) for Washington State. A working group comprising 34 people from diverse backgrounds was created to develop the plan.

The working group includes persons with early Alzheimer’s, unpaid caregivers, directors and representatives of non-profits, an attorney, a professor, a social worker, medical doctors, a Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) official, a Washington State senator and others.

The Alzheimer’s Disease Working Group (ADWG) will make recommendations on early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias, on providing coordinated services and support to persons and families living with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia disorders, and on addressing service gaps.

Diana Thompson, a co-coordinator of HLAA-WA’s Bellevue chapter and a former HLAA-WA board member, has taken the lead in representing HLAA-WA in the development of the ADP. She attended ADWG meetings and spoke during the public comment period. She successfully urged Karen Utter, President of HLAA-WA, and Professor Kelly Tremblay of the University of Washington’s Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences, to testify at an ADWG hearing, and she submitted two documents to the ADWG on behalf of HLAA-WA.

The first document, entitled “The Relation Between Hearing Loss, Dementia, Brain Atrophy and Cognitive Decline” focuses on theories as to why hearing loss is connected with dementia and cognitive decline, and how to prevent, delay or decrease cognitive decline in persons with hearing loss. The article also discusses why persons who could benefit from hearing aids don’t obtain them or use them. The second document sets out recommendations related to hearing loss for inclusion in the ADP. Both documents are available from Diana at dianaft21@gmail.com.

Diana’s participation has meant that ADWG members and DSHS staff have been educated on the connection between hearing loss and cognitive decline, the number of seniors with hearing loss, and the importance of treating hearing loss.

Also, because Diana and others attending ADWG meetings with her have requested hearing accommodation, DSHS staff and ADWG members have been educated about induction (hearing) loop systems, FM systems, and CART (real-time captioning).

The first draft of the ADP will be completed in July 2015 and is expected to include recommendations related to hearing loss. Diana anticipates writing about the completed ADP and the recommendations related to hearing loss in a future issue of Sound Waves.
Local HLAA Chapters and Support Groups

Information, Education, Advocacy, and Support

Meeting times may change. Visitors, friends, family members and healthcare professionals are always welcome at any of our meetings. Please note that some of the groups do not meet during July and August. We suggest sending an e-mail to be sure the group is meeting when you plan to visit. See www.hearingloss-wa.org for more information.

BELLEVUE — 2nd Saturday 1:00 pm
Lake Sammamish Foursquare Church,
Rm. 104, 14434 NE 8th St., Bellevue
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system, induction loop, CART (real-time captioning).
info@hearingloss-wa.org or Karen: 206-817-3213

EAST JEFFERSON CO. — 4th Monday 1:00 pm
Port Townsend Community Center,
620 Tyler St., Port Townsend
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system.
Emily: 360-531-2247, mandelbaum@olympus.net.
Meetings are held Sept—Oct and Jan—May

RENTON — 2nd Friday 12:30 pm
Renton Senior Activity Center,
211 Burnett Ave. N., Renton
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system and CART (real-time captioning).
Glenda: philiofam@gmail.com or 253-631-2345 (evenings).

SEATTLE — 2nd Tuesday 6:45 pm
Aljoya Conference Room
450 NE 100th St., Seattle
Hearing assistance: amplification, induction loop, CART (real-time captioning).
Karen: 206-817-3213 or SeattleHLA@gmail.com.

SPOKANE — 2nd Saturday 9:30 am
Spokane Nexus Center
1206 N. Howard, Spokane
Hearing assistance: amplification, induction loop, captioning.
Margaret 509-893-1472 or hlaspokane@gmail.com.

TACOMA — 2nd Saturday 9:30 am
(alternates with CI Support Group)
HLAA CHAPTER meets in Sept, Nov, Dec, Feb, Apr and Jun.
TACID, 6315 S. 19th St., Tacoma
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system, CART (real-time captioning).
Jerry: 253-686-1816 or
Penny: pennyallen@q.com

SOUTH SOUND COCHLEAR IMPLANT SUPPORT GROUP —
2nd Saturday, 9:30 am — Meets Oct, Jan, Mar, May, Jul.
TACID, 6315 S. 19th St. Tacoma
Hearing assistance: amplification, FM system, CART (real-time captioning).
Christine: Christine@cs-dhhrs.com or 253-256-4690.

WHATCOM CO. — 3rd Saturday 9:30 am
Christ the Servant Lutheran Church,
2600 Lakeway Dr., Bellingham
Hearing assistance: amplification, induction loop and CART (real-time captioning).
Charlene: 360-738-3756 or charmackenzie@comcast.net

Looking for a chapter?
Please contact us directly if you are interested in attending or if you’d like to start a chapter in your area. Karen, SeattleHLA@gmail.com or info@hearingloss-wa.org

Online Resources to Keep Informed

Bookmark the HLAA-WA website at hearingloss-wa.org for resources and information.

Like the HLAA Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HearingLossAssociation.

Find out which venues are looped for your entertainment at www.loopseattle.org.

Hearing Loss Magazine is available online at www.hearingloss.org/membership/hearing-loss-magazine/current-issue.

Sign up for the HLAA monthly eNewsletter at www.hearingloss.org/content/e-news-sign.
comprehension in difficult listening situations, and deliver new CI programming techniques to convey the fine acoustic details of musical pitch and timbre.

Participating in research is new for most people and they don’t know what to expect. Before enrolling someone in a study, the staff will thoroughly explain the purpose, risks, benefits, logistics (including payment for participation and travel reimbursement), and time commitment. Sometimes one study isn’t right for a person or their family, but another is. Participation is voluntary, and privacy protection guidelines are followed. HLAA member Bob Beers, a frequent participant in research studies at the UW, says “I have spent hundreds of hours in UW CI research programs and continue to do so, hopefully helping others.”

During research visits, subjects may be asked to participate in computer-generated listening tasks, speech perception tests, measurements of electrical activity through their cochlear implant, instrument and melody identification, and preference questionnaires. Many participants learn new information about their own, or their child’s, hearing abilities. Bob Beers notes that “participants have an opportunity to become much more informed about their CIs.” He adds: “In my case, information gathered in one of the Bierer Lab studies identified a CI program that was more effective for me than the program I was using. After consultation with my cochlear implant audiologist, this program was implemented at my next CI visit, and I am now enjoying it every day.”

Studies related to CIs are occurring at different locations on the campus of the UW:

- Bierer Lab, Department of Speech & Hearing Sciences
- Horn Lab, Virginia Merrill Bloedel Hearing Research Center
- Phillips/Rubinstein Vestibular Lab, UW Medical Center
- Drennan/Rubinstein Lab, Virginia Merrill Bloedel Hearing Research Center

If you would like to make a difference, please add your name and information to the UW Communication Studies Participant Pool (http://depts.washington.edu/partpool/). You will be contacted by one of the UW research staff about what studies are available, and if you qualify to be a participant. You won’t regret it!
improve communication. AR includes Auditory Training (listening activities that enhance speech understanding), Communication Strategy Training (strategies to understand in difficult environments), Communication Partner Training (strategies for a hearing partner), Educational Outreach (providing education about hearing loss to the community), Assistive Listening Device Consultation and Lip-Reading/Speech-Reading Therapy.

AR is not a new concept. When audiology started out as a professional field after World War II, audiological emphasis was on AR, not on technology. Servicemen who sustained hearing loss during combat received one hearing aid and were enrolled in an intensive eight-week AR program at places like Walter Reed Medical Center and the U.S. Navy Hospital in Philadelphia. For eight hours a day, five days a week, patients participated in a variety of classes that provided strategies and support as they prepared to accept their new life—a life in which hearing loss would always be present. The hearing aid was a component of the AR program. It was not the solution.

As hearing aid technology improved, allowing for smaller instruments better adapted to daily life, and signal processing changed from analog to digital, the focus of audiology shifted to the hearing instrument itself as the solution to hearing problems. When CIs were developed in the 1970s, technology became even more of a solution for many people with hearing loss.

By helping patients understand their hearing test results—in particular their word recognition test results (say the word “ball”; say the word “room”, etc.)—audiologists can provide appropriate guidance as to what to expect from hearing devices. Today’s advanced technology has definitely made hearing aids and CIs very beneficial. But providing our patients with strategies and support to enhance their overall communication success remains a key adjunct to teaching them to use their devices.

Is this being done? Sometimes yes, sometimes no. Computer-based programs offer support to individuals who are self-motivated to practice on their own at home. Many audiology clinics in the Puget Sound area provide computer-based programs to their patients. Much more difficult to obtain is in-person AR, where work is done directly with an audiologist, and where patients benefit from the coaching and motivation provided by interacting

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with an audiologist. AR may also occur in small groups, where patients benefit greatly from the experiences, knowledge and encouragement of peers.

The scarcity of in-person AR exists primarily because insurers don’t reimburse patients for AR provided by audiologists! Historically, speech therapists taught lipreading skills and audiologists tested hearing and dispensed hearing aids. Speech therapy, including lipreading training, was considered reimbursable by insurers. But as auditory training shifted to include concepts other than lipreading, and became the work of audiologists, insurers failed to incorporate the shift into their reimbursement schemes.

Today, despite continuing improvements in hearing aid and CI technology, the audiology profession increasingly recognizes the importance of providing additional strategies and support to hearing aid and CI users. What should you do to obtain support? Speak with your audiologist and inquire about AR. He or she will be able to provide assistance, or guide you to a professional who can help.

In the Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences at the University of Washington, I teach AR to students working toward their Doctor of Audiology degrees. Sensitizing students to the importance and benefits of AR, to the need to go beyond just providing patients with technology, is achieved in the classroom. But it is also achieved through participation in AR sessions with patients. My patients include hearing aid users and CI recipients, with varying degrees of hearing ability, and in diverse stages of aural rehabilitation.

Exposing audiology students to the progress made by patients is the best way for them to understand how to be better audiologists. And the objective of teaching AR allows us to charge nominal fees to patients for the AR sessions they receive, overcoming the limitation presented by the lack of insurance coverage for AR.

For more information about AR, please see http://depts.washington.edu/sphsc/clinicalservices/hearing_services.shtml

POLICY AND REGULATORY UPDATES: HLAA IN THE NEWS

**HLAA Influences New IT Access Rules**
HLAA recently filed comments on information technology (IT) with the federal government’s Access Board, an agency charged with promoting equality for people with disabilities. The comments, presented in relation to updating the accessibility guidelines of the Telecommunications Act and filed jointly with several other organizations, focused on sound clarity, management of background noise and ability to control volume.

**AT&T Announces Real-Time Text Rollout**
AT&T has announced that it will add Real-Time Text (RTT) capability to its mobile network. Unlike existing messaging capability, RTT allows users to see text as it is typed (rather than only after a message is sent), similar to TTY technology for fixed-line telephones.

Consumers will see a significant rollout of the capability in 2017. AT&T is the only service provider to have announced a RTT rollout, and no regulatory standard yet exists for the technology.

**HLAA Board Adopts Three New Policy Statements in May:**
1. HLAA supports amending the Social Security Act to include coverage of hearing examinations for prescribing, fitting or changing hearing aids, coverage of hearing instruments and for aural rehabilitation. Medicare currently excludes coverage for hearing aids and for examinations for prescribing, fitting, or changing hearing aids.

2. HLAA supports a standardized approach to screening for hearing loss in primary health care settings.

3. HLAA supports a hearing healthcare system that provides consumers easy access to all hearing technology, based on individual need and ability to pay.
   - Hearing technology should not be proprietary and should be usable by consumers of all brands of hearing devices.
   - Access to hearing technology should be available through multiple points of entry, including audiologists, hearing aid specialists, otolaryngologists, direct website access, pharmacies and retail outlets.
   - Functional performance standards should be created for all hearing technology.
   - Multiple platforms—websites, informational brochures, product labeling and in-store information—should be used to provide the information and education for informed consumer decision making.
The event was sponsored by the Washington Relay program of the State’s Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), and provided attendees with a wealth of information on hearing loss.

Judi Carr, HLAA-WA Board Member, spoke at the Seattle HLAA-WA meeting in June about her work with the hospital education program. Judi presented a skit to illustrate the problems that can befall unprepared patients with hearing loss. The skit, "seen and heard," continued on page 3.

SUMMER READING SUGGESTIONS

Here are several recent books of interest to people with hearing loss:

By HLAA Board of Trustees Member Katherine Bouton

*Shouting Won’t Help: Why I—and 50 million Other Americans—Can’t Hear You (2014)*
By HLAA Board of Trustees Member Katherine Bouton

*No Excuses: Growing Up Deaf and Achieving My Super Bowl Dreams (2015)*
By Seattle Seahawk Derrick Coleman Jr. (with Marcus Brotherton)

*The Way I Hear It: A Life with Hearing Loss (2015)*
By HLAA Member Gael Hannan

*Listening Closely: A Journey to Bilateral Hearing (2011)*
By HLAA Member Arlene Romoff
starring HLAA members Bill and Aundie Collison, as well as Kiki Pederson, highlighted how well a prepared patient can manage a hospital stay, while an unprepared patient suffers frustration, poor care and missing hearing aids.

Judi discussed how the HLAA-WA hospital kits she and others developed are key to being a prepared patient. The kits contain cards with tips for hospital personnel about communicating with a patient with hearing loss, signage and other handy items. The HLAA-WA educational kit has been adapted for use by hospitals with patients who have hearing loss.

July 26, 2015, will mark the 25th anniversary of the signing of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). Among many celebrations around the country and in Washington State, there will be a rally and celebration in Seattle on July 22. Key information:

**WHEN:** July 22
4-6pm

**WHERE:** Westlake Park
Downtown Seattle

Planning for the event is being led by a steering committee of ten organizations, including the State’s Independent Living and Rehabilitation Councils, as well as advocacy and non-profit service organizations. Speakers at the event will include representatives of the State and City government, and of the State Legislature, as well as community advocates and representatives of organizations serving the disability communities.

HLAA-WA urges all members, and anyone who is disabled or has a friend, co-worker or family member with a disability, to join in celebrating this key anniversary of legislation that gave civil rights to people with disabilities.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

The Seattle City Council will be installing an induction (hearing) loop in the Council hearing room between August 24 and September 2.

HLAA-WA has offered to help with volunteers who have t-coils in their hearing devices and who have experience in the use of induction loops.

Please contact Cheri Perazzoli at cheripz@gmail.com if you would like to support the City Council’s initiative and help enhance HLAA-WA’s relationship with the City of Seattle.

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Dr. Cherri Hoyden Doctor of Audiology
Many Thanks to our GiveBIG Donors for 2015!

Our donors made GiveBIG 2015 a success for HLAA-WA. Many thanks to all of you.

HLAA-WA works hard to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, advocacy, and support. We are an all-volunteer organization and your donations will allow us to continue our work by helping pay for printing costs, website maintenance, to attend health fairs and other events, and so much else. On behalf of HLAA-WA, thank you for your much-needed support.

— Karen Utter, President of HLAA-WA

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Louis Touchette  
Karen Utter  
Joan Walston  
Warren Weissman  
Jacquelyn Westwood  
Richard Wollin
speech recognition scores were hearing so differently after implantation, some achieving high scores on speech recognition tests and others much lower scores.

This became the challenge—to figure out what accounted for the differences between these two groups of patients and develop techniques to help those with poor speech recognition. Dr. Bierer concluded that a likely source of variability must be the “electrode-to-neuron” interface—the link between the physical cochlear implant electrode and a CI recipient’s hearing nerve.

Studies in the Bierer lab at the University of Washington Speech and Hearing Sciences Department investigate this link and seek to improve the signal transmission between the CI electrodes and the hearing nerve of the CI recipient. Assessing the electrode-neuron interface includes tests of pitch perception, electrode position, and electrical nerve stimulation. Optimizing the interface is investigated by focusing the electrode stimulation pattern to be more refined within the cochlea, and stimulating only those electrodes in the array that give the most robust results during assessment. Dr. Bierer says that “the potential improvements in speech and music perception for all CI recipients are what make this work so rewarding.”

Please visit the Bierer Lab website at https://sites.google.com/site/biererlab/ to learn more. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting research, you can sign up to participate via the website or by using the Participant Pool link at http://depts.washington.edu/partpool/info.html.

2015 HLAA-WA Board of Trustees

We serve as an extension of HLAA in an effort to make hearing loss an issue of concern within our state by promoting the HLAA philosophy of self-help while specifically addressing the issues of awareness, education, access and employment among our citizens who are hard of hearing.

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We welcome articles, letters, and notices of coming events. We may abbreviate submissions due to space constraints. Any content may be reprinted or disseminated, as long as the author or this publication are credited. We encourage health and service professionals to make copies available to their clients. Submission deadlines are April 1, July 1, October 1 and February 1.

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Welcome to Sound Waves
Summer 2015

A quarterly publication of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Washington State Association

Mission Statement:
To open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

12th ANNUAL HLAA-WA FAMILY PICNIC
Saturday, July 11th
10:30 AM to 5:00 PM ~ Eat at Noon
Lake Boren Park, Newcastle, WA

Bring your family and friends and meet some new faces along with old friends. The park features walking paths, children’s play area, picnic shelters and a fishing dock. Adjacent to our covered eating area are restrooms, two tennis courts, a basketball court, a sand volleyball court, and an expanded parking lot.

- We’ll provide hot dogs/sausages, condiments, bottled water, ice, paper plates, cups, napkins and utensils.
- Please bring a potluck dish to share.
- Bring potluck dishes by last name: A-P bring a salad or side, Q-Z bring dessert.
- Water and coffee will be available. Alcohol is not allowed in this park.
- Please also bring folding chairs for comfortable visiting and let us know if you can supply a folding table.

Driving Directions: 13058 SE 4th Way in Newcastle (off of Coal Creek Parkway, between Factoria and Renton).

Traveling South on I-405, after the I-90 interchange take Exit 10, Coal Creek Parkway SE. Go about 4 miles. There is a small lake on your right. Turn RIGHT onto SE 84th Way (stop light) at a sign that says “Lake Boren Park.”

Traveling North on I-405, take Exit 5. Turn RIGHT onto Hwy 900 (NE Park Dr., which becomes Sunset Blvd.) Go about 3 miles, then turn LEFT at light onto Duvall Ave. NE, which becomes Coal Creek Pkwy SE. Go about 1 mile and turn LEFT onto SE 84th Way (stop light).

The Park entrance is on the RIGHT shortly after turning into SE 84th Way. Follow it into the park, near the gray restroom building, and park there (the only building and parking lot in the park). Behind the building is our shelter.

Thank you to the Renton HLAA Chapter
Information or questions: Glenda Philio
philiofam@gmail.com
253-631-2345