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HEARING CLINIC**

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Living Well with Hearing Loss

VOLUME 3 SPRING 2013



Words from Experience

I am a 38-year old mother, wife and attorney and I have worn hearing aids for over ten years. The audiologists call my hearing loss "moderate to severe." My father has a similar hearing curve, as does my grandmother. I will be perfectly honest – when I realized that I had hearing loss, I felt a little bit sorry for myself. But in many ways it has ended up a blessing. In fact, in the laundry list of things I would change about myself, my hearing ranks pretty low.

By way of background, when I was in college, my roommate always gently chided me about my hearing. I did not take action then but I certainly knew that she was right – I didn't hear as well as everyone around me. After three very difficult years of law school and six years of legal practice where the dreaded conference call was my biggest fear, I finally got my hearing checked. The audiologist was astonished that I had functioned as long as I had without hearing aids. Her diagnosis stung, despite what I already suspected.



Melissa Pignatelli O'Brien and family

My husband knew me before and after hearing aids. He has always been very supportive. We nicknamed my hearing aids "French fries" to give them a positive connotation (there are few things I like more). While my hearing aids don't give me perfect hearing, he has witnessed firsthand how they changed my life. He certainly gets

frustrated sometimes but has made many behavioral adjustments to help me. It was, and continues to be, a learning process for both of us.

And then my two boys came along. As a parent of young children, my hearing loss definitely comes in handy sometimes. I thought my babies were great sleepers. I rarely hear arguments if they have the good sense to have them in another room. As teenagers, I probably won't hear them complain about how embarrassing I am. However, perhaps one of the most challenging things for me about my hearing loss is communicating now with my young children. Most people have experienced the difficulty in deciphering the words of a child just learning to speak. They are garbled, they mispronounce, they jump from subject to subject, and they talk constantly about seemingly irrelevant things. It is hard for a hearing person to follow their conversation. Add a hearing loss to the mix and it becomes close to impossible. I was afraid that my boys would never have the confidence to speak because I was often confused when they attempted.

Feature continued on page 3

Past, Present, Future

This 3rd edition of our newsletter features a selection of the many highlights from our last year. As Spring 2013 comes to a close, Dr. Harris enters her transition into retirement and Dr. Marrone assumes the Chair of the Living Well program.

From Dr. Harris: I am so proud of what we have accomplished and thrilled to pass on the leadership and guidance of the program to Dr. Nicole Marrone. I will remain involved during our transition and certainly as a consultant as needed in the future. To all of our participants on and off campus – remember that **communication is a two-way street**, and habits are difficult to change. Good luck to all of you as you continue through this journey.

From Dr. Marrone: Looking back, I remember meeting Dr. Harris during my faculty interview and getting excited about the University of Arizona. I remember learning about the development of an innovative

program to improve quality of life for people with hearing loss of *all* ages. Was it an oasis in the desert? So often when



Dr. Harris, Dyan & Jim Pignatelli, Dr. Marrone

people think about hearing help, the focus is on the ear rather than the whole person, let alone including communication partners.

Compelled to join this forward thinking group, I love being in Arizona and getting involved. This year I have been immersed in the program. Highlights included attending my first groups and community outreach events, listening to students describe all that they learn by participating,

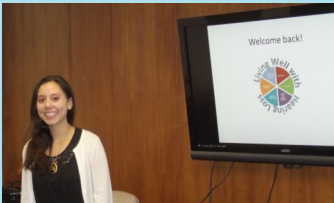
and having conversations with research participants in my lab who shared their personal stories about hearing loss and the program's impact. In December, I was also fortunate to meet Jim and Dyan Pignatelli, whose personal and financial contributions continue to make this program possible. The team continues to grow, with new collaborations and new students. It was a terrific year and I look forward to the next. Yet, this year has been bittersweet with knowing that Dr. Harris will be retiring. Dr. Harris has inspired many people to shift their thinking towards living *WELL* with hearing loss through her work. The program moves forward with her leadership, mentorship, and care for the community. I am so happy to have had the opportunity to work with Dr. Harris. We thank her for always reminding us to think about *what each person can do* to improve quality of life with hearing loss.

Dr. Harris and Dr. Marrone

A Student's Lessons

Working in the Living Well With Hearing Loss (LWWHL) program this year has been a whirlwind learning experience. Throughout this time, I have seen the **powerful effects of group learning and group sharing**. I have learned about personal qualities and habits that I myself must break. Ultimately, the biggest lesson I have taken away is learning that it all comes down to the basics.

One of my favorite aspects of the Living Well With Hearing Loss groups is seeing friendships form amongst the participants. After the initial first-class "shyness", I have seen participants gain trust with each other. And witnessed moments in which participants expressed their empathy as their co-participants **shared moments of frustration, success, happiness, and difficulties they encounter** because of hearing loss. I enjoyed listening to their personal accounts, and learning from their advice to one another.



Daisey Sanchez leading a group session

As a personal goal, I hope to take the lessons I have learned from participants, and share them with Spanish-speaking individuals who have similar experiences.

I have also learned about my shortcomings as a communicator. Even as an Audiology student, I have a hard time reducing my speech rate, enunciating my words clearly and facing the person I am talking to. I have an inside joke with my brother, that when I am at a baseball game rooting for the Giants, I whisper my cheers rather than scream them. All of my life I have spoken in a quiet, high-pitched voice. I am used to speaking in a fast pace, and often forget to look at the person who I am speaking with. But after my experiences this year, I know that if I don't stop to remind myself who I am talking to, I can be one of the worst possible communication partners for someone with hearing loss. **LWWHL has taught me that more communication partners, like myself, need to be educated about speaking to someone who has a hearing loss.**

"We are often in a rush and forget to put ourselves in someone else's shoes..."

It's not that communication partners don't care about their partner or whether their partner hears everything that is being said. It's that we are often in a rush, and forget to put ourselves



Daisey Sanchez, LWWHL Participant Mrs. Bozanic, & LWWHL Student Clinician, Giau Le

in someone else's shoes. What may be simple for one person, such as listening to a friend in a noisy restaurant, may require more effort for another person. We need to be reminded that good communication requires a give and take.

Lastly, I have learned that **it all comes down to the basics. Good communication requires good basic habits**, regardless if one person has a hearing loss or not. Good communication requires a lot of patience, repair strategies to manage through difficult times, and it requires consideration for the other person. I understand these basics are not easy to learn, they may take a life-time of practice before they become second nature. But these basics are rules that can be applied to any human to human interaction.

Written by Daisey Sanchez, B.A. Program Assistant

Tinnitus Interview with Lynn Iversen

1) What sparked your interest in tinnitus?

One of first the patients I observed in clinic was a patient who had tinnitus, and at that point I had really no idea about what tinnitus was. The more I began to learn about tinnitus, the more I realized how many patients have tinnitus.



Dr. Marrone & Lynn Iversen at the 2013 Academy of Rehabilitative Audiology

2) How did the on-campus tinnitus management program get started?

Before beginning the tinnitus management program on campus, I facilitated the tinnitus management program at the Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System. Given the growth of the VA program and the overwhelming number of patients with tinnitus, we decided to implement a similar Living WELL with Tinnitus program here on campus.

3) How would you define "effective management" for someone who has tinnitus?

There is not one management that will be effective for everyone. Every person is different and requires different management techniques. A big reason why we started the management program here is that this program is designed to meet people where they need it most and

not try to fit them into a "one-size-fits-all" approach.

4) What is one notable lesson you have learned from working with patients who have tinnitus?

I have learned many valuable lessons and techniques while working with patients. Being able to interact with so many patients with tinnitus has allowed me to expand my clinical abilities and understand more about the effects of tinnitus. The more you work with patients, no matter their concerns, there will be a better overall understanding of what the patient experiences.

"The more you work with patients, no matter their concerns, there will be a better overall understanding of what the patient experiences."

5) What is your advice to someone who has tinnitus?

Because there is no cure for tinnitus, if you feel that tinnitus is negatively affecting your life, seek appropriate

medical care. There are numerous management strategies and programs available to those with tinnitus.

For information on the UA, Living WELL with Tinnitus Program, contact (520) 621-7070

Campus Group Programs

To date, The Living Well With Hearing Loss team has held **41 groups**, attended by over **450 participants!**



LWWHL groups and participants, Fall 2012–Spring 2013

LWWHL Team at El Pueblo Senior Center



Protect Your Ears!

The **Protect Your Ears Program (PYEP)** was started in January 2013 to bring hearing conservation awareness to youth, ages 5-13 years. This interactive program is led by a team of University of Arizona Audiology faculty and graduate students, with assistance from service-learning students enrolled in the undergraduate Hearing Science course. **Program Coordinators: Fran Harris, PhD, CCC-A, CCC-SLP, Nicole Marrone, PhD, CCC-A, Nydia Quintero, B.S., Curtis Vanture, B.S., and Jaclyn Hellmann,** an SLHS Undergraduate Honors student.

The PYEP includes information for the children about the profession of audiology, about anatomy and physiology of the ear, the types of sounds that can cause hearing loss, how to identify when they are in harmful hearing environments and 3 things to do to protect hearing (cover their ears, turn down the volume and walk away from loud noises). We talk about how to improve communication with family members who have hearing loss. Based on this first experience at **four sites with over 80 children**, PYEP has had a successful start, and we've had a lot of fun!

PYEP is currently presenting to local community centers, after school, and summer programs. **To obtain more information about our PYEP program, contact the main clinic number, 621-7070.**

Contributed by Nydia Quintero and Curtis Vanture



Curtis Vanture and Nydia Quintero presenting at an after-school program



Walk Before You Talk

As a former speech/language pathologist who has worked with children with hearing loss periodically over the years, I knew the signs of hearing loss and knew that my husband, Dick, was beginning to show these signs 15-20 years ago. I urged him to be evaluated by an audiologist, and he began wearing hearing aids approximately 8-9 years ago. As the years have gone by, his hearing has worsened and he has had much more difficulty understanding speech especially in the last three years. Although his loss did not really interfere with our communication with each other until the last three years, it was increasingly problematic in outside situations, particularly noisy ones.

Since I believed I knew a lot about hearing loss and about communication, in general, it never entered my mind that I might benefit from a course devoted to helping adults with hearing loss and their partners.

Dr. Tom Muller mentioned to me a couple of years ago that the University offered a course on "Living Well with Hearing Loss" that we might want to take. My immediate response was that I already knew quite a bit and did not think I needed such a course. **It took me only two minutes to rethink that and realize that I absolutely could learn from such a course and also needed refreshers about what I do know!** Well, I was right—I learned NEW

information in the course and also re-learned some information that I had forgotten! It was also very helpful to my husband.

One of the things that I realized during the course was that as 'old married folks', **we had developed communication habits over the years that were often not working now.** Trying to talk to each other from different rooms was one habit that we had long had that needed to be changed. This was something we both did. Although we have mostly stopped this, one of us occasionally still does it—we have to keep working and improving! Another response that I had been giving (I am ashamed to say!) was repeating something Dick did not hear and **yelling it.** Even though this was absolutely something I knew NOT to do, I was doing it anyway. This was frustrating for both of us but particularly for Dick. **Now my response is to repeat it with a little louder voice (sometimes, if necessary) with NO yelling and, more importantly, talking more slowly.** I also make sure he is looking at me.

Dick says that the most important thing he learned during the course was, **"Walk before you talk"**. We have a fairly long family room/kitchen, and Dick was frequently asking me a question from the kitchen when I was sitting in the family room with my back to him. I, then, tried to answer him from the family room. Even when I turned to look at him, he was usually not close enough to hear me and often did not look at me. He has definitely changed this habit. When he asks me a question in this situation, he usually walks over to me in the family room. This, of course, helps both of us.

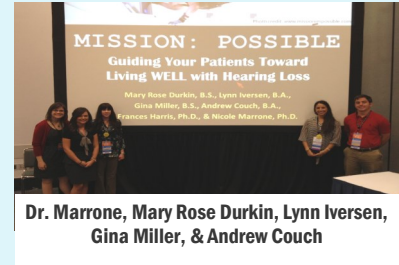
Sincerely, Dick & Judy Kroese



Morgan Nelson & Mr. and Mrs. Kroese

American Academy of Audiology 2013

The American Academy of Audiology celebrated its 25th anniversary at the annual Audiology NOW! conference held in Anaheim, California April 3-6, 2013.



Dr. Marrone, Mary Rose Durkin, Lynn Iversen, Gina Miller, & Andrew Couch

The Living Well with Hearing Loss graduate student team traveled to the conference and presented as part of the student programs. The presentation, "Mission Possible: Guiding Your Patients Toward Living Well with Hearing Loss", was designed to educate other students on how they can establish and run their own successful group audiological rehabilitation program. The presenters were a team of second and third year students in the AuD program at the U of A. The Audiology NOW! Conference gave us experience as presenters at a large national conference.

Contributed by Gina Miller, B.S.

Words from Experience, Continued from page 1

But young children are the most curious and accepting human beings. My boys don't think there is anything "wrong" with me. They want me to hear them. So they learned how to communicate with me. They look me in the eye. They speak slowly and clearly. They don't talk to me when my back is turned. For the most part, they do not get frustrated when I don't get their meaning right away. I personally think those are good life skills – looking someone in the eye and being patient in conversation is how you should interact with everyone, not just the hard of hearing.

"My boys... learned how to communicate with me. They look me in the eye. They speak slowly and clearly. They don't talk to me when my back is turned. For the most part, they do not get frustrated when I don't get their meaning right away. I personally think those are good life skills"

More important than the talking, is the listening. There is a significant difference between "hearing" and "listening." I would like to think that discovering my hearing loss has made me a better listener, an important skill to pass on to my children. I know that when my husband, my children, my friends and family want to talk with me, I need to stop what I am doing and give them my full attention. If I try to multi-task, I always miss the point. I would hope that being truly present in conversations is a skill I can teach my boys that will pay off in their work life, their friendships and their family interactions.

I guess what I am saying, is that you can look at hearing loss as a disability. Or you can look at hearing loss as an opportunity. I'm certainly not perfect at it, but I hope that more times than not, I do the latter. And I hope that the opportunities hearing loss entail include the ability to teach my children to be better communicators, both in the talking and in the listening.

*Contributed by: Melissa Pignatelli O'Brien
Supporter of the Clinical Program
for Audiologic Rehabilitation in Adults*



Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences

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A friendly reminder!

If you didn't hear what was said, **DON'T** say "What?" or "Huh?" Instead, remember to use these strategies to help the conversation flow!

- **The Keyword Strategy:** Repeat what you *did* hear. This lets the speaker know that you didn't miss the *entire* message.
- Let the speaker know that you have a hearing loss AND how to speak to you.

Relax! Habits are hard to break. Just remember to use your strategies!

For poster on **communication strategies**, follow this link:

<http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/ASHA/Publications/leader/2012/121218/University-of-Arizona-Communication-Road-Map.pdf>

University of Arizona Hearing Clinics
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The University of Arizona Hearing Clinic is a full-service hearing clinic offering diagnostic evaluations, hearing aids, assistive technology, cochlear implant mapping, Living Well with Hearing Loss classes, consultations

For appointments contact:
(520) 621-7070

For local and national resources, consult our website:
<http://lwhl.arizona.edu/>

Email us with suggestions or contributions for the newsletter or to be added to the email list:
UAHearing@gmail.com

Yes! I am proud to support the **Living with Hearing Loss program** in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences (SLHS) at the University of Arizona. Your contribution will support graduate student assistants or provide scholarships for those who are unable to pay for the group programs. You may designate how you would like your contribution to be distributed. (Clip and return). Contact us at UAHearing@gmail.com

Contributions are tax deductible!

Make your check payable to: **The University of Arizona. Please send to Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences, 1131 E. 2nd St. Tucson, AZ 85721**

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