

Hearing HealthCare News[®]

A newsletter for our patients, their families and friends

Fall 2024

Dr. Mark Hammel's Hearing Loss

Jane Brody, personal health columnist for *The New York Times*, has written several articles on the problems caused by untreated hearing loss, calling it "perhaps the nation's most costly sensory handicap. Its onset is usually gradually and thus easily ignored."

Brody described the case of Dr. Mark Hammel, a practicing psychologist from New York. Like many people, Dr. Hammel put off seeking help for several years after first noticing hearing difficulties:

"It's sad to think about how much I had missed all those years."

"It was sad when I contemplated how much I had missed all those years. I could hear well enough sitting face-to-face with someone in a quiet room, but in other settings I had no idea what they were saying. Eventually I stopped going to social gatherings."

Brody cited a survey of 4,000 individuals with hearing loss and their family members and friends. Survey results showed that hearing aid users were more socially active and less likely to be depressed, worried or insecure than non-users. Their family and friends reported even greater benefits than the hearing aid users themselves.

Other researchers found that untreated hearing loss can lead to frustration, social isolation and reduced communication at home. Those who sought help for their hearing loss reported improved family relationships.

Like Dr. Hammel, most people wait several years before seeking help even after becoming aware of their hearing loss. The long period of not hearing well can have a negative effect on cognitive health—untreated hearing loss is a proven factor contributing to dementia. Not hearing well for several years can also make it more difficult to adjust to hearing aids. As Dr. Hammel said, "I had lost the habit of listening. It took me a while to get back into the habit of paying attention to what people were saying."

Some adults with significant hearing loss never seek professional

What Else Besides Hearing Aids?

Hearing aids allow people with hearing loss to attend regular schools, get better jobs, stay socially active, enjoy a better quality of life—and help keep their brain active and healthy. However, hearing aids do not "cure" hearing loss. Some challenges always remain, such as trying to hear in movie theaters and noisy restaurants.

Assistive listening devices (ALDs) provide additional help for these challenging settings. ALDs allow you to hear better because sound is sent directly to you. ALDs virtually eliminate interference from reverberation, room noise and background voices.

ALDs include large room systems installed in churches, theaters and auditoriums and personal systems for use in classrooms, conference rooms, restaurants and cars. There are also devices to assist you with television or on the telephone. ALDs also include alerting devices such as smoke alarms and telephone and doorbell ring alerts.

For example, **FM amplification** has been used in school classrooms for years to assist students with hearing loss to hear and understand the teacher better. The teacher wears a wireless FM microphone that transmits a radio signal to the student's hearing aids (with FM receivers). It's as if the teacher is always standing right next to the student.

Audio induction loops are often used in large settings such as public meeting rooms and theaters. The induction loops create a magnetic field that sends the signal to any hearing

help, forcing their family and friends to compensate for their inability to hear well. For many people, encouragement from a family member or friend is the motivating factor. You can help them by telling them the difference hearing help made in your life.

Please contact us if you would like a copy of the *Times* article.

aid user with t-coils in their hearing aids. This allows the person to hear the speaker without amplifying other distracting sounds in the room.

Infrared transmitters are used in some theaters and are available for home use. The signal is transmitted via an invisible infrared light beam to anyone wearing the lightweight infrared receiver. Only the sound source is amplified. Other conversations or noise in the room

are not amplified, so hearing ability is greatly improved.

Many hearing aids today are capable of **wireless connectivity**. A wireless transmitter can be attached to your home phone or television set. The sound is then transmitted directly to your hearing aids, greatly



Assistive listening devices can be very helpful in large room settings.

Assistive listening devices virtually eliminate interference from noise and other voices.

reducing the effects of background noise or other interferences. More commonly, your smart mobile phone can send the speaker's voice directly to both of your hearing aids. Using this ALD technology, many people with hearing loss can hear better on their cell phone than someone without hearing loss.

There are many other ALDs such as specialized smoke alarms, telephone amplifiers and doorbell alerts. If you have a particular communication need, or would like more information, please contact us.

WELCOME

...to the Fall issue of our patient newsletter. We hope you find the information helpful.

Our practice is based on these fundamental principles:

- **Hearing loss is serious**
- **Hearing loss deserves professional care**
- **Hearing aids improve lives**

A New Definition of Noise

Noise is now defined as "unwanted and/or harmful sound," by the International Commission on Biological Effects of Noise. The older definition, created almost a century ago, did not include the words "or harmful"

We now know much more about the harmful negative effects of noise on physical and emotional health, as well the effects of noise on educational and work performance. The Occupational Safety and Health Commission (OSHA) has established legal requirements for permissible noise exposure in the workplace. But noise can also cause hearing loss in non-work settings such as concerts, at home and even in restaurants.

Daniel Fink, chair of *The Quiet Coalition*, favors the change in definition as it acknowledges the auditory and non-auditory effects of noise exposure. According to Fink, noise is "the new secondhand smoke," and draws a parallel to when individuals wanted smoke-free restaurants, stores, planes and workplaces.

Society for the Suppression of Noise
Concern about the effects of excessive noise is not new. In 1907, Julia Barnett Rice formed the Society for the Suppression of Noise. Their chief concern: the loud sounds of tugboat whistles and street vendors, in New York City.

The Ear Echo

Your ear creates an echo when it "hears" sound. These echoes—called otoacoustic emissions (OAE)—can be recorded by placing a microphone in the ear canal. Thousands of very brief sounds are sent into the ear canal and the echoes are recorded automatically.

OAE testing is objective and can be performed by automated screening equipment. This technique has made hearing testing of newborn babies easy, cost-effective and accurate. More than 95% of babies born in the United States now have their hearing tested before they leave the hospital.

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Hearing Loss And Its Associated Diseases and Medical Conditions

Hearing loss, if untreated, not only impacts your ability to communication, it affects your physical and mental health and even your relationships. Hearing loss is a chronic condition that has long lasting negative effects. There is research linking untreated hearing loss to many disabling conditions and diseases such as:

- Missed Conversations, Social Isolation and Loneliness
- Depression, Memory Loss, and Dementia
- Heart Disease

We know that the sooner hearing loss is identified, the more treatment options are available. Understanding your unique hearing loss symptoms is the best way to find a solution. If you have been suspecting hearing loss or have multiple comorbidities listed above, call us to schedule an appointment for a hearing evaluation.

Sincerely,

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