



The newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter

WIRED FOR SOUND

January Meeting Notes

Mary Clark, HLAA Albuquerque

Dr. Camille Dunn came to us from University of Iowa to share information about cochlear implants (CI). Her presentation included information and details I've never heard before, so even someone who thinks she knows something about CIs found a lot to learn. Dr. Dunn gave us a bit of history about CIs and when they were first implemented. We also learned more of the most current terminology surrounding the current practice with implanting CIs in patients who have one-sided deafness and how some patients are able to retain some residual hearing in the low-frequencies. While that outcome of retaining some residual hearing is not easily predicted, more research is being done to figure out how to better understand why some candidates will experience this, and others do not.

I've always referred to there being three "brands" of CIs in the US, but as of roughly 6 months ago, the FDA approved a CI made by Oticon Medical in addition to the original Advanced Bionics (AB), Cochlear, and MedEl. My experience is that although the basics of the CI from each company are very similar, the pieces that differentiate them is usually the external parts.

We learned that once an electrode is inserted inside the patient's cochlea, that is permanent. (Although I have heard of "revision surgery" where an electrode is removed and replaced, this is very uncommon.) Once the electrode is in place, then the



"processor" which is the piece on the outside that sits over your ear and has the microphone in it, can get software upgrades, and sometimes, even hardware upgrades. There ARE some models that skip the part over your ear and combine all the functions into the magnetic piece that attaches to your head where the other end of the magnet connects to the electrode wire. These are usually more rectangular and require a stronger magnet to hold them on, since they are not as lightweight as the external magnet that is connected to the "over the ear" model.

Dr. Dunn also shared some graphs showing improvement in word recognition that dated back to the original CIs implanted around 1980. Over time, they have modified the words used to test recognition. The graph also showed that people with two CIs showed not only improved environmental hearing (figuring out directions that sound is coming from and learning noises) but also improved word recognition as well. The practice in early CI implantation focused on the worst ear, and rarely considered doing both ears, even if both would qualify. Over time, the observation of improved speech and environmental hearing changed the policy, and it is much easier now to be considered for two CIs instead of only one.



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HEARING LOSS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER
Providing support and advocacy for
people with hearing loss

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 **Hearing Loss Association of
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chapter**

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19 Feb Meeting 10:00 AM - Noon On **Zoom**

As long as COVID high case rates remain, so do restrictions. We will continue meeting only on Zoom until further notice. Our Web Page (HearingLossAbq.org) will have updates and the link to join the Zoom meeting.

Hearing, Listening, Cognition and Amplification

Speaker: Dr. Douglas L. Beck Au.D



In February, we are pleased to welcome Dr. Douglas L. Beck. This presentation will focus on the importance of hearing, listening, cognition and amplification. The Covid-19 pandemic has discouraged some hearing aid users from wearing their devices daily because of the fear of losing them due to the masks. Some hearing aid users believe that because they are staying home and isolating, they do not need to wear their hearing devices, because there is nothing or no one to hear. However, this is far from the truth.

Every person has his or her own unique ability to understand speech in noise. The factors which determine your ability to understand speech in noise include your hearing, your listening ability, your cognitive abilities, your hearing aid(s) and more.

In this brief talk, Dr. Beck will review the key points which determine how well you can understand speech in noise.

Dr. Beck began his career in Los Angeles at the House Ear Institute in cochlear implant research and intra-operative cranial nerve monitoring. By 1988, he was Director of Audiology at Saint Louis University, and in 1999 he became President and Editor-in-chief of AudiologyOnline.com, SpeechPathology.com and HealthyHearing.com. In 2005 Dr. Beck joined Oticon, and by 2019 he was appointed Vice President of Academic Sciences at Oticon Inc.

The HLAA ABQ Chapter is always looking for volunteers. You can man a special project. You can help us out for a few months, or consider a longer-term commitment. "Try us out" for a month or two. We will provide orientation for working on a nonprofit board, share our chapter's mission and goals, and discuss topics we can use your help with. If interested, contact any board member (contact info at left), or use the chapter email hlaabq@gmail.com.

The age limit for doing CI surgeries ranges from the most recently modified low end at 9 months of age, with no real upper end, as long as other health considerations are positive, Dr. Dunn reported on a 99-year-old who received a CI.

When we sort of bombarded Dr. Dunn with questions. She was very gracious about answering them, and gave us her email address as well. We

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From National HLAA

HLAA filed comments to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on its proposed rule establishing Over-the-Counter (OTC) hearing aids. Once finalized by the FDA, consumers 18 and older with mild to moderate hearing loss will be able to purchase hearing aids at retail and online outlets.

HLAA and organizations that signed onto these comments recommended the FDA require labeling both outside and inside the package informing consumers when a smartphone or other technology is needed to set up and use the OTC hearing aid. HLAA and the organizations also recommended the FDA require labeling that informed consumers about OTC hearing aid compatibility with wireless phones and audio connectivity options such as telecoil or Bluetooth. HLAA and other signatories also asked the FDA to require a free 45-day trial period for purchasers to receive a full refund if the OTC hearing aid does not meet their needs.

noticed that she didn't make it through all of her slides. Who knows, maybe she'll be back, and we can learn more. That would be awesome!

Thanks to Victoria Rivera for lining up Dr. Dunn to do this presentation. She was clearly an experienced presenter and explained things very well.

Amazon Smile You can donate to the Albuquerque Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America every time you make a purchase of most of the products from Amazon.

Go to <http://www.hlaabq.com/amazonsmile.html> for more information and detailed instructions on how to designate HLAA-ABQ Chapter as your charity of choice when you make amazon.com purchases.

Once you have set it up, always log into smile.amazon.com to purchase from amazon. 0.5% of the purchase price is automatically donated to HLAA Albuquerque Chapter—at no cost to you.

Other issues in the comment letter addressed the classification of self-fitting hearing aids and the importance of usability without professional intervention. HLAA and the organizations also noted the need to pay particular attention to the needs of two populations that stand to gain from OTC hearing aids: underrepresented minorities (low income and people of color) and older Americans.

The proposed rule built on the work of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM). HLAA provided critical input to the PCAST and NASEM reports and was a visible presence to Congress as it considered and passed legislation authorizing the FDA to create this class of OTC hearing aid.

Other organizations that signed the comment letter are:

- Association of Late-Deafened Adults, Inc. (ALDA)

Yearly dues are \$15 per household.
They are due in January.

- American Deafness and Rehabilitation Association (ADARA)
- American Council of the Blind (ACB)
- American Tinnitus Association (ATA)
- Cerebral Palsy and Deaf Organization (CPADO)
- Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc. (CSD)
- Deaf In Government (DIG)
- National Association of the Deaf (NAD)
- Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons (NVRC)
- Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Technology for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH-RERC)
- Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (TDI)

For more details, see the [full comment letter](#).¹

Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

The holiday dinner table

You can picture the dreaded scene—a long table with 10 boisterous relatives all talking at once.

In all honesty, nobody can hear much of anything, but with hearing loss it can feel particularly overwhelming. So just before Christmas I sat down with a family of grandparents, their “kids”, and teenage grandkids to demonstrate how a hearing loop works and to practice using one at home in anticipation of the holiday festivities.

In addition to all the personal benefits, the small portable loops that we have been discussing in this column make for a wonderful teaching tool. Most of the time hearing loops are completely invisible. They seem downright magical, and woo-woo! “Walk into this room’s magnetic field and you will suddenly hear everything!”

The portable loop itself visibly demonstrates the three physical components required for any loop system (copper loop, microphone, driver), as well

as showing how the telecoil user must be in its magnetic field in order to receive the sound signal.

On this day I took along a “loop receiver” pack and headphones so that all the family members who don’t use a hearing device could hear through the loop. Magic indeed happens when I plug in an auxiliary microphone with a 10-ft cable, take it around the corner and whisper into the mic, which of course they can hear through the loop even if they can’t see me or hear me directly!

For their holiday dinner, we strategically seated the loop user at one end with the 2 folks he most wanted to hear on either side. The auxiliary mic was placed at the far end. The loop user was able to toggle between the loop’s internal mic for the nearby conversation or the far mic to pick up the other end of the table. Using his telecoil-only setting helped eliminate ambient sounds.

Was it perfect? No. Was it much better? Absolutely yes! Did everybody at the table hear everybody else? Of course not! And they also used the loop in the kitchen, living room and watching TV together once they realized how well it worked to include their family member better in other conversations.

A police car with its lights flashing and siren wailing pulls up behind a man who is hard of hearing. The man doesn’t see the lights flashing because his car is loaded with suitcases and clothes for his trip. The officer finally pulls him over by driving alongside and motioning to him.

“Didn’t you see my lights?” the officer asks.

“I’m sorry. There’s so much stuff in the back I could not see.”

“Didn’t you hear my siren?”

“No; I’m hard of hearing.”

“Well, maybe you should get a hearing aid if you’re going to drive so fast.”

“Nah!” the man replied. “Tickets are cheaper.”



¹ <https://app.getresponse.com/click.html?x=a62b&lc=S8OAon&mc=JL&s=ByMPuzX&u=QQmeu&z=EGGKpf&>

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The Hearing Loss Association of America is a volunteer association of Hard of Hearing people, their relatives and friends. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. Membership in the national organization is by annual dues, which are separate from the annual Chapter fee paid to your local chapter. National membership includes a subscription to the bi-monthly publication Hearing Life.



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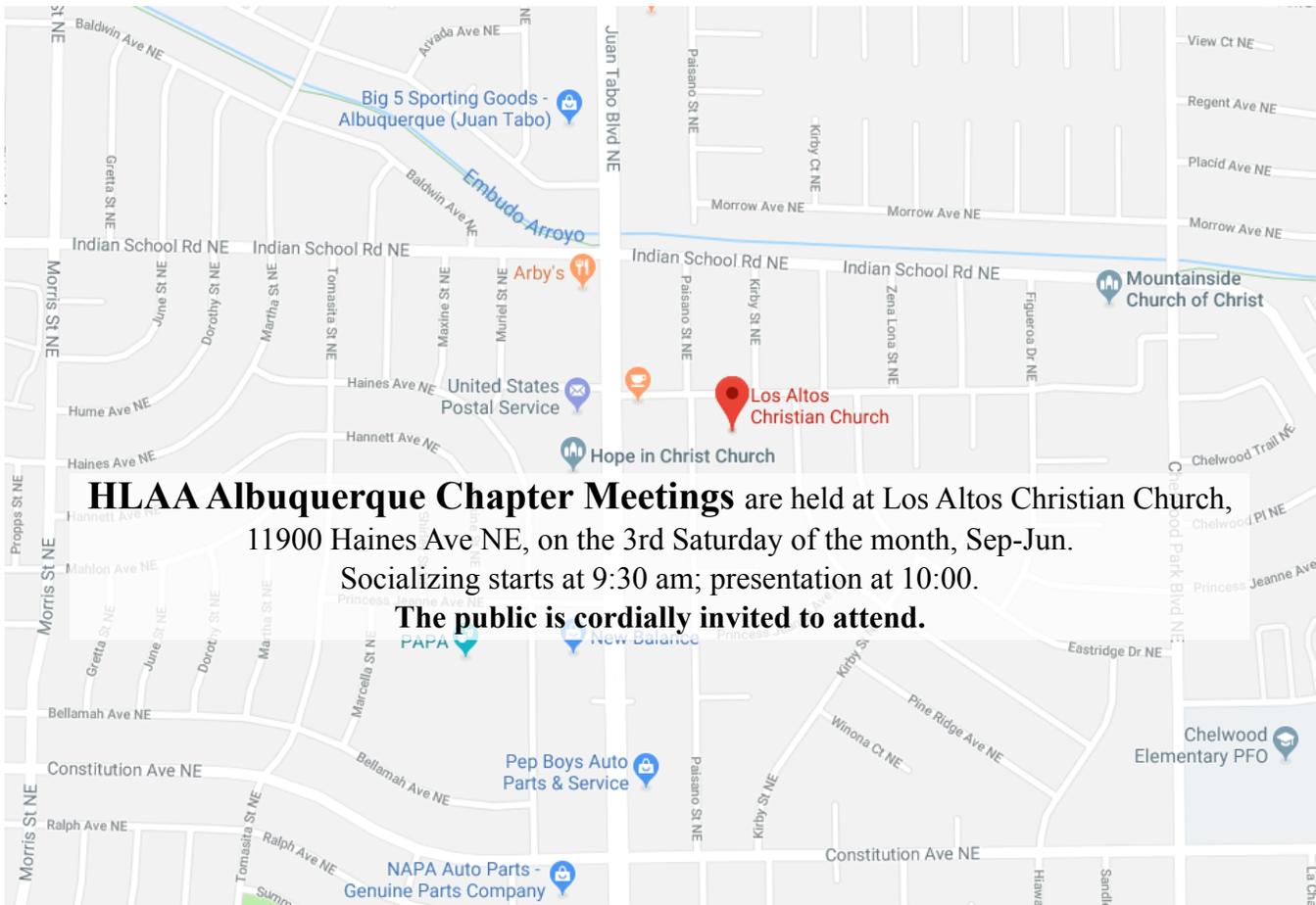
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HLAA Albuquerque Chapter Meetings are held at Los Altos Christian Church,
 11900 Haines Ave NE, on the 3rd Saturday of the month, Sep-Jun.

Socializing starts at 9:30 am; presentation at 10:00.

The public is cordially invited to attend.