



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

WIRED FOR SOUND

Considering a New Hearing Aid?

Bobbi Rodriguez, HLAA Albuquerque

When you get a new pair of glasses, your eye doctor gives you a battery of tests, then a prescription, and you select the frames and lenses. When you receive your new glasses, you put them on, fitting adjustments are made, and you're all set. Getting hearing aids isn't nearly as easy. Many other factors need to be considered.

I was unhappy with my old hearing aids. I was struggling to understand conversations and felt left out. I have always had a love for music, and now music sounded rather sour to me. At church, I might know where we were in the hymn but had no clue what key we were in. My piano sounded out of tune. You get the picture.

Then I heard about the new Oticon Zeal. It is very compact and has the latest technology. These hearing aids are designed to better balance the conversations and suppress noise around you to give you the best clarity, even in noisy situations. People who wore them were saying music sounded wonderful to them. They were able to understand conversations in situations they hadn't been able to before.

I called my audiologist and asked her if they would work for me. I have severe bilateral hearing loss, and she wasn't sure they would be powerful enough, but she agreed to give it a try. When I tried them, she even tested music and made adjustments for a music program on my new hearing aids.

My husband and I went to lunch after the visit. The restaurant wasn't super noisy, but I could discern kitchen noise and people talking around us. Yet, I was able to understand everything my husband said. On the way home we had music play-



ing. Until I turned on the music program, it sounded more like a solo with light instrumental. Afterwards, I heard other voices and several instruments. I asked my husband if those had been there from the start of the song and he said they had. I could hear the melody and all the beautiful harmonies! At church, my eyes teared when I was able to discern the various instruments in the orchestra and the vocals, and could pick up the melodies. I understood the words. I knew what key we were in. And with all that going on, I could hear myself as I sang.

At a gathering with 18 around the table, I could hear and carry on conversation around me. As we shared, I understood the people furthest away. I felt like a normal hearing person!

Since then, my family has noticed I am more engaged in group conversations. I hear the TV and movies with more clarity. I'm able to carry on conversations from the back seat of the car. I'm not asking for things to be repeated as much. I'm hearing sounds I wasn't able to hear before, even things going on in other rooms of our home. My sister said she heard confidence in my singing she hasn't heard in years, and my musical husband is relieved I can find the key instead of changing keys throughout the song. I later had a Noisy Environment setting added on one of the channels. It helped me not only in the restaurant, but in the back seat of the car, I heard the front seat conversation even better than without that setting.

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**Hearing Loss Association of America
– Albuquerque chapter**



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20 Jun Meeting 10:00 AM - Noon. **Map on Back Page**

Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder

Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSD) is a unique type of hearing condition where sounds are detected by the ear but don't always travel clearly to the brain, making understanding speech especially challenging. In this informative presentation, Dr. Maggie Kettler from Cincinnati Children's explains what ANSD is, why it varies so widely from person to person, and how it is diagnosed. She highlights common signs, causes, and the importance of early and accurate testing.

The session also explores current treatment options—including hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive technologies and emerging gene therapies—while emphasizing that every individual's journey is different. Attendees will gain practical tips for supporting loved ones with ANSD and learn why early intervention, regular monitoring and personalized care are key to improving outcomes and communication success.

Dr. Kettler will be on Zoom, but we encourage you to check out our live meetings. It's worth it just for the fellowship! We are excited to be able to return to having the opportunity to meet in person again.

We have met in person since January 2026 at the Deaf Culture Center (DCC). Their charter includes serving both the deaf and the hard of hearing populations in this area. Their event room is on the ground floor of the PAH! Highland Plaza apartment building at 5000 Central Ave SE, Albuquerque, NM 87108. There is a map on the back page. Parking is on Jackson Street or at an abandoned Auto Zone across the street. Enter from Central Ave.



We could use help in setup, handling the meeting and tear-down. We also want some new blood. You can ease your way into volunteering and learn how this works. Just email one of the board members (listed on the left). You may also use the chapter email: HLAAbq@gmail.com.

Please note I'm not telling everyone to go out and get Oticon Zeal. They are working great for me by giving me clarity and understanding. I can wear them almost all day. They come ready for AuraCast. However, because they are based on Bluetooth LE (low energy), they are so small they cannot accommodate a t-coil. Fortunately, I haven't needed t-coil with these hearing aids, but lack of t-coil could be a problem for some users.

Caution: Each of us has different hearing needs and we need different types of hearing aids. Also, hearing aid technology has vastly improved in all hearing aids. It is easier now than ever to get hearing aids that fit anyone's needs to give them more understanding of conversations and sounds around them.

The HAAA Albuquerque Chapter has a questionnaire that can help you identify situations where you struggle to hear and perhaps what things

you would like to hear. It is designed to get you thinking ahead of what issues you want to discuss with your audiologist when purchasing your next hearing aid. It will help your audiologist choose the best hearing aid for your hearing loss and how to program them for the situations where you don't want to miss what is being said. Start by taking note of specific situations where you find yourself struggling to understand what is going on. Ask friends and family in what situations they see you struggling to hear. Be as open and specific as possible when talking with your audiologist.

If you want a PDF of this questionnaire, look for "Purchasing A Hearing Aid Checklist" on our website: hearinglossABQ.org. If you have trouble finding or downloading it, e-mail HAAAabq@gmail.com and ask for the "Purchasing A Hearing Aid Checklist".



May Meeting Summary

Zoom AI; edited by "Rod" Rodriguez

Recap

Sarah Duncan, an audiologist at the University of New Mexico, discussed oral rehabilitation and listening effort for people with hearing loss. Hearing loss requires increased cognitive effort from the brain, similar to running multiple apps on a phone, but properly fitted hearing aids can reduce this mental workload through features like noise reduction, directional microphones, and wind/feedback management. She covered various auditory training programs including HEAR app, Angel Sound, and others that are available for free to help strengthen auditory pathways, and mentioned her 6-week oral rehabilitation program at UNM that teaches participants about hearing loss, communication strategies, and technology. The limited effectiveness of speech reading for adults was discussed, and the importance of family support and consistent use of hearing aids. Age-related neural slowing affects speech understanding.

Hearing Aid Features and Performance

Various features of hearing aids that help with noise reduction and listening comfort include automatic noise reduction programs, directional microphones, and wind/feedback management. The number of microphones in hearing aids affects their performance, with up to 4 microphones available in certain styles. Behind-the-ear devices are more susceptible to wind noise than in-the-ear devices. Hearing aids work best when combined with counseling, communication strategies, and auditory training, as they are aids rather than corrective devices.

Hearing Loss Management Strategies

Various strategies for managing hearing loss include aural rehabilitation programs, communication counseling for couples and families, and auditory training. Sarah's 6-week oral rehab program at UNM (facilitated by graduate students) covers

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anatomy, hearing loss types, psychosocial implications and technology. Specific communication strategies include managing noisy environments and speaker variables. Auditory training programs can help improve speech clarity and track progress through scoring systems.

Supporting Hearing Loss Patients

There was some discussion of how family and friends can support individuals with hearing loss in

using hearing aids and accessing aural rehabilitation programs. Sarah emphasized the importance of bringing communication partners to hearing aid fittings and appointments, as well as encouraging consistent use of hearing aids to stimulate the auditory system.

The next meeting will be held on June 20 with a speaker from Cincinnati Children's Hospital who will discuss cognitive development in children and adults.

The Listening Lounge

Adult Group Hearing Rehab

Are you or a loved one struggling with hearing loss? Join our free supportive and engaging group program to strengthen listening skills and communication strategies. Together we can improve your quality of life! This is a free program!

Join us for 5 sessions; topics may include:

- Type/severity of hearing loss
- Communication strategies
- Hearing loss and cognitive decline

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- Psychosocial support and counseling
 - Accessibility and accommodations
 - Technology

Session 1: 9/2/26-9/30/26

Session 2: 10/28/26-11/25/26

Wednesdays 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m.

UNM Speech and Hearing Clinic

1700 Lomas Blvd. NE Suite 1300 Albuquerque,
NM 87106

For further details, call (505)277-4453 or email SHS-Admin@unm.edu.

Loop People, Loop Places

Ginevra Ralph

So You're Going to Court: Part III

Your right to "effective communication" in court is covered under the ADA. But what does that mean, individually, for you? All courtrooms are required to have an assistive listening system, typically infrared, but what if you don't have a telecoil and can't wear headphones? And sometimes understanding accents can be a challenge even with perfect reception.

You report your hearing loss ahead of the trial date. You let them know that the ALS is not sufficient alone for you to understand the proceedings. You are told that you can request a sign language interpreter. Great, but you don't know sign lan-

guage! It will essentially be up to you to let them know what WILL work for you.

A good option could be CART captioning (Communication Access Realtime Translation) which you can request with no charge to you. The captioner, who may be working remotely, types in real time, but unlike the court reporter has the leeway to not be perfectly verbatim to help with comprehension.

If you still are unsure of something, you can request additional communication support, which could be good old pencil and paper in the moment. Your day in court is yours, and you have both the responsibility and the right to understand clearly what is going on. . That is what is meant by "effective communication" and only you get to decide what that is for you!

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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 automatic with any donation (separate from any Chapter dues). A \$45 or more donation to National HLAA provides a subscription to the bimonthly publication Hearing Life.**



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