



Your Trusted Hearing  
Healthcare Professionals

# INNOVATIVE PERCEPTIONS

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR HEARING AWARENESS IN THE GREATER BOSTON AREA

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## Technology update: Own Voice Processing

As I have been working with hearing aids over the past 17 years, one concern from wearers has remained fairly steady—"My own voice sounds weird." Having hearing aids in your ears can make your voice sound louder than the surrounding environment, may make chewing sound louder, and can make it more difficult to hear others while you are talking. This happens because your voice is closest to your ears, so it is only normal that you will hear your voice louder.

One way to reduce this effect when wearing hearing aids is to try and keep your ears as open as possible by using small domes in your hearing aids instead of fuller earmolds. This has its pros and cons. While keeping our ears open can be more natural for our own voice, sometimes it decreases how well some of the other features of the hearing aid works. But one hearing aid company, Signia, is trying to overcome this feeling of hearing your voice differently, while keeping the important behind the scenes processing features intact. How? They have developed a new hearing aid line, the NX, with "Own Voice Processing" or OVP. OVP tries to



regulate the volume of your own voice by balancing it with other sounds in the environment. This way, your voice does not stand out over the other voices you want to hear. It also makes chewing sounds less noticeable and environmental sounds clearer. The experience I have had with this hearing aid has been pretty great. My patients are saying how natural the overall sound quality of the hearing aid is and how much better they are hearing in noise.

Noisy places, such as restaurants, parties or other social events, can be extremely difficult to function in. Even people with normal hearing have difficulties understanding in background noise, missing up to 40% of the words. So any improvement in this very challenging environment can significantly increase the enjoyment of it.

One of the ways the NX is able to help hearing in noise is by allowing behind the scenes processing to work better by keeping more of the sounds in (as indicated earlier, this is completed by closing the ear canal more). Another way it helps in noise is by the flexibility of the mobile phone App. Using the App, the patient has greater control over the focus of where the hearing aid picks up the sounds. If you want a no-risk trial of this new technology, just give us a call. Better hearing is waiting for you! □

## Selective hearing?

Is there such a thing as "selective" hearing. Researchers have found that there just may be some fact to this common complaint, especially when people are listening to familiar voices, but they also found that those familiar voices are actually clearer to understand. The study had people repeat what their spouses said and then repeat what an unfamiliar voice said. They found that people are much more accurate understanding a task given to them when it was given by a familiar voice. Age can also play a significant factor in the ability to understand voices. Middle-aged adults are actually able to use the familiarity of a voice (i.e., their spouse) in a group to be able to ignore that voice so they can focus on the unfamiliar voice (selective hearing!). But the ability to ignore the familiar voice, decreased with age. "Middle-aged people can ignore their spouse—older people aren't able to as much" stated the author, Ingrid Johnsrude of Queens University, Canada. The importance of this study is that it shows that as we age it can be more difficult to be able to understand speech if the voice is not familiar to us since our ability to focus and ignore information decreases. □



## Whales and Ear Wax

What exactly is ear wax? Cerumen, the medical term for ear wax, is necessary and actually cleans and protects our ears. It is made of oil secretions and is used to catch debris, helps clean our ear canals and protect them from insects (the wax is poisonous to insects). Ear wax can be soft or hard, wet or dry, yellow or brown....I hope I haven't completely grossed you out yet! Some people make a lot, some people make a little, similar to if someone has oily or dry skin. Bottom line, it is healthy for our ears and varies in many ways. Interestingly, it



can also help researchers find out information about the lives of blue whales. Researchers at Baylor University have found that the ear wax of blue whales contains a lifetime of

information relative to stress levels, pollutants, and hormones. It seems that their ear wax continues to build up over time, layer upon layer, each layer telling a story of a different period in the whale's life. The researchers studied the wax of a 12-year old male blue whale and found exposure to pesticides in infancy, likely from its mother's milk. They saw that testosterone levels increased around 10 years old, when the whale would be near its sexual maturity and it showed consistently increasing stress hormones. This information can help us learn more about their ecosystem and what may impact the health and life of these animals. □



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## **AUDIOLOGY AND HEARING SOLUTIONS, INC**

*Dear Friends,*

*Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter. We had such a great response to our 15% offer for our 10 year anniversary, I have decided to extend it through the summer. So come in today to test out new technology and **receive up to 15% off any new hearing aid.** We have been very excited about the new Signia NX hearing instruments (see inside article) and the improvement our patients have seen, both in the clarity of the hearing aid and improved understanding in noise. Come in and give it a try today! If I don't see you, have a safe and enjoyable summer!*

*Sincerely,*

***Dr. Melonie Marple***

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