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Tell us your story.



Roy Smeya

"Dr. Trudy Baker has had the answers to all my concerns and questions which put me at ease. At my age, breaking into a whole new technological system could have been frustrating. I was ready to give up until she answered all my questions and demonstrated how everything worked."

Roy Smeya is a bilingual mission educator. He has a severe to profound permanent hearing loss in both ears. He became interested in a hearing implant because he was struggling to understand at work and in social situations. "I was barely functioning in most areas. I was {primarily} communicating by internet and email. Ambient noise canceled my ability to hear. More than 50% of my understanding depended upon lip reading. Sales clerks and attendants were visibly disgusted when I could not understand them and I avoided phone conversations or would turn the phone over to someone to interpret for me."

Mr. Smeya underwent an evaluation to determine candidacy for a cochlear implant. Although he did have notable struggles with communication, he performed too well with his hearing aids to qualify for a cochlear implant.

Continued on P. 2



Your life is our life's work.

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Earwax Management

Earwax, known as “cerumen” by the medical community, is an interesting substance. It is produced by the oil and sweat glands that line the ear canal. Earwax is an oily substance that is secreted from the glands and collects dust, hair, dead skin and small foreign objects that are in the ear canal. It is believed that earwax has several functions, including protecting the outer ear from bacteria, fungus and is also shown to be an insect repellent.

Studies indicate that young children, the developmentally disabled and the geriatric population are at greater risk for blockages of earwax. In the geriatric population, earwax is typically drier and mixes with coarse hair within the ear canal which can create an earwax impaction. Earwax can also accumulate on or in hearing devices and reduce sound quality. Routine cleaning of hearing devices will help to eliminate reduced function.

How should excess earwax be managed? First of all, avoid using cotton swabs and objects (such as hair pins) in the ear; attempts to remove earwax in this fashion may damage the sensitive skin of the ear canal or eardrum and cause outer ear infections. Cotton swabs may also push the earwax deeper into the ear causing greater impaction.

The most common at home remedy for earwax accumulation is to use a softening agent. Popular softening agents are Debrox, Murine Ear Drops,

*Earwax Management
Continued on P. 4*

Your Story Continued from P. 1

Mr. Smeya was already wearing powerful hearing devices, however the devices were older technology and not Bluetooth compatible. He decided to try newer technology so he could utilize wireless accessories that would improve his understanding in groups as well as on the phone.

Mr. Smeya now uses ReSound ENZO behind-the-ear hearing aids. In addition to using his phone as an accessory, he has other options of wireless accessories to help him communicate easier. A ReSound Mini Microphone is a small device that can be worn by a spouse, set on a table, or given to a speaker at a meeting or at church. The Mini Microphone streams the speaker's voice directly to the hearing aids so that the voice is the same volume no matter if the speaker is 2 feet or 15 feet from the hearing aid user; the speaker's voice will be perceived as louder than the ambient noise in the room, which significantly helps with understanding. "I use a Mini Mic which has transformed conversations even with 2 or 3 people. I have used the microphone at my doctor appointments. The doctor wears the microphone and I don't have

to rely on lip reading!" Mr. Smeya discovered that he can clip the Mini Mic onto his own shirt pocket and understand significantly better when he is ordering food or coffee at restaurants.

His new aids have the ability to connect directly to Apple iPhones, other Apple devices, or Samsung Galaxy phones and he is able to adjust the aids with a free app on his phone. He also receives much more benefit as he can now hear callers' voices directly in both hearing aids. "The hearing system has changed everything for me," said Mr. Smeya.

Mr. Smeya was not a previous smart phone user, but was willing to dive headfirst into the technology if it would help him communicate better. He was trained by his audiologist how to use the app to control his hearing devices.



Hear It Here!

Health News



Shari Norval, AuD

Got Moisture?

The Farmer's Almanac forecast of "wetter-than-normal" conditions for the summer of 2015 has proven to be true. I continue to be amazed at the dew in the morning in late August and early September when the ground is normally parched from weeks of searing summer heat. While my garden had an abundance of zucchini much later into the summer, my tomatoes had blight because of the rain. Unfortunately, gardens weren't the only things to suffer from this past summer's unusually wet weather. The high humidity has taken a toll on hearing aids as well. We strongly recommend keeping your hearing aids in a dehumidifier at night. The Dri-Aid dehumidifier is specially designed for all styles of hearing devices and lasts several years. After continuous use, some of the pellets in the jar will change color. Read the instructions on the jar to know when and how to reactivate the pellets, prolonging the ability to absorb moisture, which assists with preventing corrosion in the aids that ultimately lead to repairs. Moisture can also lead to poorer

quality of sound from hearing devices, therefore it is very important to use a Dri-Aid regularly.

Summer heat and humidity are not the only time to use the Dri-Aid dehumidifier. The forecast for the winter of 2015 suggests colder than normal temperatures which increases the chance of moisture when undergoing drastic temperature changes as in when leaving a warm house or car to the cold outdoors. Storing your hearing aids in the the Dri-Aid jar every night prolongs the life of the aids. Keeping your hearing aids in the Dri-Aid jar at night also keeps them safely away from pets.

If you are interested in purchasing a Dri-Aid dehumidifier, please stop by the Audiology office to purchase a jar. We also have electronic models available that not only absorb moisture, but disinfect the hearing devices as well.



**Mercy Health
Springfield Communities**

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**Warning.....
Hearing Aids
Are Not to be
Worn as
Hearing
Protection**



At about this time every year, we encounter patients who have experienced a sudden, permanent loss of hearing after shooting a firearm while wearing their hearing aids. Everyone is at risk for permanent hearing loss with even just one shot, but those who already have hearing loss are at a higher risk. In addition, tinnitus (ear noise) is highly likely as a side effect of

being exposed to high noise levels.

While digital hearing aids provide a reduction of background noise such as at a restaurant, they do not “shut off” or protect hearing from a sound like that of a firearm that can reach up to 140 decibels. This far exceeds the sound pressure level that is considered safe, which is 85 decibels

over an 8 hour period of time. Therefore, wearing hearing aids while engaging in such activities as using a chain saw, lawn mower, tractor without a cab, power tool, or a motorcycle without a full helmet, is not recommended. Take a few moments to remove your hearing aid(s) and utilize proper hearing protection (ear plugs, ear muffs, or both).

Earwax Management Continued from P. 2

mineral oil, virgin olive oil or hydrogen peroxide. The softening agents are recommended to be used in small amounts for several consecutive days to sufficiently soften through layers of earwax. These softening agents should not be used by anyone who has ear tubes or a history of a hole in the eardrum.

The most effective method for remediation of earwax is

removal by an experienced professional such as a physician or an audiologist. Routine cleaning appointments may be necessary for individuals who have persistent earwax accumulations. If you suspect that earwax may be impeding your hearing, it is recommended that you see your primary care physician for an examination of your ear canal and to develop a plan for managing the issue.