

HLAA TC

July 2020



The mission of HLAA TC is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.

Future Speakers:



Newsletter Schedule

HLAA-TC newsletters will resume its normal schedule in September.

Contributions are welcome!
(send .docx or WORD-compatible documents to editor@hlaatc.org)

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Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter (HLAA TC) is held the 3rd Saturday of the month (September thru May). We gather at 9:30 to socialize, and begin our meeting at 10 AM at The Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute, 3915 Golden Valley Road, Golden Valley, MN 55442. The meeting adjourns at noon.

President's Message



President's Message HLAATC July 2020 *Christine Morgan*

Don't we wish July really would excel by being the month that turns this pandemic and unrest around?

I'm sure you are all as tired as I am. We struggle with our "new reality" knowing that life as we knew it (both the good and the bad) will never return. We are overcome with the "w"s – worry, weary, watchful, waiting, withdrawal The pandemic, politics, and social unrest wear us down.

The Board has been busy (social distancing) and strategizing on how to continue our meetings while keeping everyone safe. HLAA-TC members will be receiving a short survey soon so we can get your feedback. Make sure you respond! We need and want your answers in order to move forward.

Unfortunately, we will be rescheduling our October 20, 2020 conference until next year. The Board, like most organizations, could not figure out a way to put on a conference safely, at this time.

Even though we are not meeting, we want you to feel free to reach out to us with questions, concerns, or just to chat. We are all feeling the isolation as we social distance from our family and friends. Skype has become my best friend and way to keep in touch with my 9 year-old granddaughter. Lionel and I have been playing bingo, Chutes and Ladders, and other games with her while we Skype. It's hard for her being an only

child and not being able to play with her friends.

I'd love to hear what you are doing to keep connected to your family and friends. How are you dealing with the mask situation? Especially, when trying to hear 6 feet away from someone.

How about virtual medical appointments? Read about what some of our members are saying in this newsletter. Please send me some of your personal stories to share!

Don't forget Dwight and I are here as mentors and to provide assistance as may be appropriate. Never hesitate to contact us. We can either help or will refer you to someone who can.

As always, remember that you are not alone. We are here to listen and to help. Stay safe and healthy!

Christine

IMPORTANT NOTICE

**The HLAA-TC October 2020
Conference has been cancelled.**
(Due to COVID-19 safety concerns)

HLAA-TC Change of mailing address:

The HLAA-TC Post Office box number
and zip code have changed.
Our new mailing address for HLAA-TC is:

**HLAA-TC
PO Box 26021
Minneapolis, MN 55426**



Communication Action Plan

Mike Higgins

“The mission of HLAA is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss by providing information, education, support and advocacy.”

This is the mission statement of our national organization and every HLAA Chapter and State Organization in the United States. The element of “advocacy” in our mission importantly includes “self-advocacy”. To support the member self-advocacy efforts, we are introducing the Communication Action Plan (CAP).

CAP will be an ongoing effort to bring together area hospitals, clinics and healthcare leaders with our members and draw attention to the concerns and safety issues of people with hearing loss (Hard of Hearing). For many of us with hearing loss communication is a combination of spoken language and visual cues, often in different degrees for each person. Most importantly, we want to equip members with tools and information to advocate for themselves. Self-advocacy is the key to navigating medical or hospital situations.

For example, here is some of the CAP advice.

- Request any necessary accommodations well in advance!
- When booking an appointment with a clinic or hospital tell them to include that you are “hard of hearing” in the appointment notes.
- Upon arrival for your appointment and responding to questions from the clinic or hospital admittance staff advise them “I am Hard of Hearing” as your last response. Confirm that the staff member understood you.
- When talking with the nurse or doctor request that your chart reflects you are Hard of Hearing and the accommodations you require. Be specific.
- Always face the speaker and ask the speaker to always face you.
- Ask the speaker to slow down.
- If you do not understand what is said, ask for repetition or clarification. Sometimes that may mean a different form of accommodation.
- Remind the speaker you are Hard of Hearing. Remember, assertive communication is confident. Aggressive communication is often considered demanding or belligerent.
- Any conversation should be directed to you unless you’ve requested otherwise.
- The words “please” and “thank you” go a long way.

We will be asking for member input and assistance during various implementation stages of CAP. Such as, would you assist in sharing or identifying contacts in local hospitals or clinics to participate in a Panel Discussion: Hospital/Clinic Safety for People with Hearing Loss. We will also be creating advice articles, tools and materials to help reduce anxiety and confusion during hospital visits.

We are excited about this new program and we hope you are too! Please send any questions or advice regarding CAP to me at: vicepresident@hlaatc.org

Virtual Medical Visits: The Sequel

Comments from our readers

How are hard of hearing people doing with Virtual Visits? Find out here!

Signe Dysken writes:

"I've had two telemedicine phone calls recently, and a few My Chart questions answered.

One was on Facetime -- and the doctor communicated clearly and was not trying to juggle charts around -- he was looking directly at the phone.

The second was with my internist, and she also handled it well, looking straight into the phone. I think that must have been FaceTime also. Since i was using my iPhone connected to Bluetooth, I heard both of them pretty well.

I've had some problems with Zoom, since not all people on Zoom speak clearly or have a good microphone. I did learn that if the person initiating the Zoom call has an "upgraded" zoom account, then the initiator can "enable captioning," and then any of the participants can activate captioning on their own computers. The captioning is automatic, no person involved, and it worked very well. If no one in the group has the upgraded Zoom account, then there is no captioning unless one person agrees to take notes for the group,

Skype does also have captioning, I have learned.

... I've used the "on-ear" headset and used it right over my hearing aids.

From Anita Guelcher:

I have not needed any virtual doctor visits during this time. I have no idea what "doxy" is! (Note from Christine – Doxy is a program some physicians use for virtual visits. It works with Google)

What I do wish to mention is that my smart phone has a program on it called "innocaption" which can be downloaded in the play store. This captions phone conversations for me, both outgoing and incoming. It has been a lifesaver. Anyway, you may find this helpful as well. (Christine's comment: Great program but haven't been able to use it during virtual visits on my SmartPhone)

Barb Schneider:

Thanks so much for your article in the newsletter. I've had a couple phone calls - don't have a camera/mic. The phone was fuzzy and I had to ask for repeat words frequently. One was with a new provider for a new issue, and her attitude wasn't great to begin with so a difficult time. Just lots of things going on but being unsure of what she was saying was most frustrating. I had to ask her a couple of times to slow down. I had specifically mentioned bilateral hearing aids but I doubt she understood what that meant for me on the other end. Will be so glad to get back to office visits.

(Virtual Medical Visits, cont.)

Veteran Jim Rau (Iron River, WI) remarks:

Remote Adjustments of Hearing Aids is Now Possible. I receive my audiology care from VA at Twin Ports VA Clinic in Superior WI, which is operated out of the Minneapolis VA Center. I got new receivers in my hearing aids just prior to COVID. They have needed some adjustment since I got them in February. VA was one of the first facilities to 'jump on' the remote hearing aid adjustment program. I got a virtual appointment last week and connected electronically with my audiologist in Twin Ports. He successfully made the adjustments for me. I was the first patient in the Minneapolis VA system to get this service. WOW! (... as a member of HLAA Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter I'm sharing with them as well.)

This technology... may not be an option for someone who struggles with computers and smartphones. But at 77 years old, I'm not a computer whiz, yet I was successful. AND I'm sure it will get better.

Thank you everyone who sent me an email regarding their experiences (and gave me permission to use their names).

I would love to hear from anyone about their experiences during the pandemic, as those of us with hearing loss struggle to communicate with virtual visits, masks, and social distancing.

Christine

Online Hearing Loss Education

HLAA (National) plans to have the 2020 HLAA convention programs available on the HLAA website soon. In the meantime, recent webinars can be viewed by going to:

www.hearingloss.org then:

click on Programs and Events

click on Webinars

click Webinar Schedule and Recordings

You will find the following recent webinars available, or you can search for others.

June 12, 2020

Advocacy During the Pandemic: Tips and Resources for People with Hearing Loss

May 27, 2020

Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR): The History, Current Technologies, and Practical Tips

May 21, 2020

Face Masks and Hearing Loss: Practical Tips and Strategies

Excerpts from *The Conversation*: COVID/hearing loss link

While the pace of research on the novel coronavirus has been impressively rapid, there remains a lot we still don't know about the wily pathogen. One of those unknowns is the potential long-term health implications for people who have had the disease...

It is well known that viruses such as measles, mumps and meningitis can cause hearing loss. And coronaviruses can cause peripheral neuropathy, damage to the nerves that carry information to and from the brain. It is possible, in theory, that COVID-19 could cause auditory neuropathy, a hearing disorder where the cochlea is functioning but transmission along the auditory nerve to the brain is impaired. People with auditory neuropathy have difficulty hearing when there is background noise, such as in a pub...

Auditory neuropathy has been linked with Guillain-Barré syndrome, an acute immune disease that affects central and peripheral nerves. Importantly, COVID-19 is also associated with Guillain-Barré syndrome.

It is important not to diagnose hearing loss where it does not exist, or where it is coincidental...[on the other hand]...we need to be prepared to act...

We (the research team of Kevin Munro, Ewing Professor of Audiology, University of Manchester) wanted to know if there was any more robust evidence, so we conducted a systematic review of the available evidence...

Until the data have been published in a peer-reviewed journal we need to treat it cautiously...

Following up with COVID-19 patients will probably teach us a lot about the long-term consequences of this destructive disease.

Read the whole article here:

<https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-why-were-investigating-the-long-term-impact-on-hearing-139702>

Alzheimers/Hearing Loss link

Journalist Cathy Cassata in her online article in Healthline April 11, 2020 remarks on the work published in The Lancet.

"While more scientific evidence is needed...the published work so far indicates that the use of hearing aids can slow the rate of cognitive decline to levels that are experienced by older adults without hearing loss. In fact, a major work published in The Lancet ... identified hearing loss as the No. 1 treatable cause of premature cognitive decline."

Excerpted from "How Managing Diet, Exercise and Hearing Loss Can Lower Alzheimer's Risk"

(The Lancet is a weekly peer-reviewed general medical journal. It is among the world's oldest and best-known general medical journals.)

(Excerpted from an article by columnist Jennifer Brooks for the Minneapolis Star Tribune on 5/12/20)

“Cathy Bratter misses faces...

Bratter, a [Minnetonka artist](#), communicates by lip reading. Or she did, before all the lips vanished behind masks. COVID-19 has killed more than 80,000 Americans, and masks are one of the few things that can help slow the spread. But for thousands of Minnesotans with hearing loss, the masks are a barrier to communication that leaves them isolated and misunderstood... But the same masks that can slow the spread of germs can cover our smiles and hide our words. We should care about that too.

‘I have no idea when someone is talking to me without seeing a mouth move,’ Bratter said. ‘So people may think I am rude or a snob by not replying’...

If you’re crafty, and if you have access to anti-fog plastic, like clear vinyl stadium bags, you can find clear face [mask patterns online](#)...

If you do make or find a clear mask, you might not meet one of the more than [30 million](#) Americans with hearing loss. But you’d be able to turn to the next person you meet and give them a smile.”

Read the full story here:

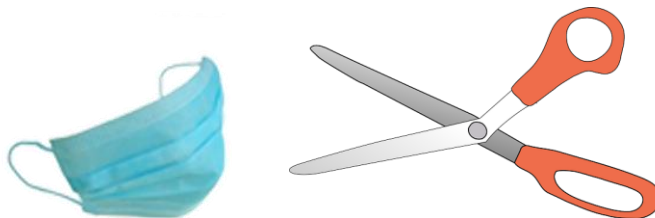
<https://www.startribune.com/i-never-felt-handicapped-until-now-minnesotans-with-hearing-loss-face-a-masked-world/570419102/>

Short Cut

In the last few months many people – hearing or not – have noticed that not only does a mask muffle the sound of the speaker, it also hides all of the speechreading cues.

Are “window masks” the answer? Maybe, but they often fog up.

My brother-in-law’s solution to this: “Just cut a hole in it!”



Dilemma

If people wear masks, then we can't hear them as well. If we can't hear them as well, we have to ask them to speak louder. If they speak louder....

Excerpts from Loudness matters: COVID-19

By Korin Miller

"COVID-19 has earned a reputation for being a highly infectious virus, and a new study only emphasizes that.

The study, which was published Tuesday in the [*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*](#), recruited volunteers and asked them to repeat the phrase "stay healthy" several times into the open end of a cardboard box. While they were doing this, the researchers used laser light technology to track the respiratory droplets that were generated while the study participants spoke.

When they analyzed the data, the researchers found that about 2,600 droplets a second were created when people talked. *And the louder people spoke, the larger the droplets and the more of them were produced...*

Even scarier: Based on their calculations, the scientists found that the droplets can hover in the air anywhere from eight to 14 minutes after they're released."

Korin has been published in The Washington Post, New York Daily News, Cosmopolitan, Women's Health, Men's Health, Glamour, The Bump, and Yahoo, SELF, Parade Magazine and others.

Notes from the CATSS Newsletter June 2020 :

"We're all working from home. Laboratory research in CATSS, and at the University at large, has ground to a halt..."

(to help take up the slack, this new study is being conducted online):

"The effects of increased social isolation during the pandemic. Co-PIs Peggy Nelson (SLHS) and Gordon Legge (PSY) are leading a CATSS-sponsored study investigating the social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on seniors with sensory disabilities...

"Yes, in addition to the human costs, the pandemic has thrown a monkey wrench into human subject research everywhere. Here at CATSS, we are hopeful that we will be able to resume our research before too long -- perhaps in new and novel ways -- and in the meantime, we are committed to investigating other issues that have arisen from the pandemic itself."

More on Masks

Never have we been served with so much information about the challenge of hearing ordinary speech! We wish it were not so, of course, but the silver lining emerging from these mask issues is greater awareness among all of us – including people with normal hearing – of the importance of clear and appropriately loud speech. Pick up any newspaper, and you can read about it.

Excerpted from:

For Minnesota's deaf and hard of hearing, wearing masks is another barrier to communication
by Miguel Otárola, Minneapolis Star Tribune, May 2020

“Face masks have become a new obstacle for people with hearing loss — in Minnesota, that’s estimated to be 20% of the population, according to the state Department of Human Services. A [recent study](#) highlighted by audiology publication the Hearing Review showed that a simple mask can reduce a voice by 3 to 4 decibels, while the N95 masks medical workers use can reduce it by close to 12 decibels...

“For someone who wears hearing aids, reads lips or uses American Sign Language, seeing the mouth is key, said Darlene Zangara, executive director of the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing...When you have a mask on, you can’t lip read,” said Zangara, who identifies as Deaf...

Some creative alternatives are helping.

People are making masks with a clear plastic cover over the mouth. Others are wearing shirts with text explaining they are hard of hearing.

[ShellyHendricks] designed and ordered 100 blue buttons with a message in bold type: “I have a hearing loss. I can’t read minds. I can read lips. I can read.” She has given away several and begun wearing them.”

Sound advice

As important as it is for us to find and use all of the visual accommodations that are available, we should not forget that good sound can be a key element in boosting our comprehension. This excerpt shows us how.

Accessibility Strategies for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Remote Meetings *By Catharine McNally*

Quality Acoustics

Just as important as it is for me to be able to “see” you, maximizing the audio environment goes a long way.

- Use a quality headset with a microphone.
- If your environment is prone to noise (such as from home-schooled kids), consider installing an app like [Krisp](#) that helps cancel out some of the background noise.
- Know how to (quickly) hit the mute button. One bark from a dog is okay, a solid minute of barking is not.
- If multiple people are in a conference room, ensure that the microphone has a good range to catch all speakers **well**. No speaker should sound too far away.

A noisy meeting environment increases listening processing (and fatigue) for us all, especially those with hearing loss, so let’s look out for each other and *mute ourselves* when we’re not talking. We’ll be less exhausted in the end.

Read the whole story here (ctrl click): <https://www.hearingtracker.com/news/accessibility-strategies-for-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-people-in-remote-meetings>

Working Strategies: Career (re) building in the post-pandemic era

Amy Lindgren, Career Counselor and columnist for the St. Paul Pioneer Press, offers a list of five steps to prepare yourself for a job in the post-COVID world. She goes into much detail for each of the steps (omitted in this excerpt), but it is the fifth step that is the shocker for people with hearing loss. Read on.

“...Whatever your current situation, today’s question is straightforward: Are you ready for a future that may demand intervals or even long-term stints of home-based work?...

1. Analyze your job...

2. Research...

3. Identify new directions...

4. Get trained... which

5. Learn the tools of telecommuting. None of this will matter if you can’t hold a conversation using a video app on your phone or computer... It’s becoming clear that everything from doctor’s visits to job interviews are going to be video-dependent...”

Clearly, we need accessible apps! Consider this an invitation to share your knowledge about the best (and worst) of the communication apps you are familiar with.

All too Rare

While traveling this winter, I carried numerous books with me on my Kindle. One of these was a travelogue by Mark Twain, Innocents Abroad.

As a first-time traveler to the Middle East, Twain experienced two kinds of culture shock: the kind that hits you when you realize that your “acceptable” behavior is suddenly all wrong, and the kind that creeps up on you as you learn to deal with it day by day. In this latter category are the language challenges that demanded daily effort – and still failed to close all the gaps in communication.

My favorite quote from this book is what he exclaimed on returning home, where everyone spoke English: ***“Oh, the rare happiness of comprehending every single word that is said!”***

We at HLAA-TC wish that “rare happiness” for every single one of you!





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Welcomes You!

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Meetings are held the 3rd Saturday of the month September through May at the Courage Kenny Rehabilitation Institute in Golden Valley (3915 Golden Valley Road), MN. We gather at 9:30 to socialize and the meeting starts at 10. Accommodations: All meetings are real time captioned by Lisa Richardson and her staff of *Paradigm Captioning* (www.paradigmreporting.com). The meeting room is also looped for T-coil or receiver.

Please visit the chapter's web-site at www.hlaatc.org or visit us on Facebook: [groups/HLAA-TC](https://www.facebook.com/groups/HLAA-TC).