

ENT & audiology news

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Charities and Humanitarian Work

This edition of *Audiology Matters* will introduce you to the range of humanitarian work that is going on in the field of audiology, and I think you will be both surprised and impressed at what is happening in many places in the world. You may even be inspired to contribute in some way. Mark Haggard, as newly appointed Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Deafness Research UK, discusses some of the challenges to charitable endeavours in a time of economic difficulty. Jackie Clark, in her role as chair of the International Society of Audiology Humanitarian Committee, raises some of the ethical concerns that apply to this type of work. This is something that is becoming a more significant aspect of humanitarian work as the relationships between developed and developing countries become more complex and sophisticated. It is no longer acceptable for an organisation to parachute into a situation, provide some interventions, and then leave without providing an appropriate infrastructure for continuing support and development.

A number of organisations have taken the opportunity to showcase their activities – some you may already be aware of and others that are new to you. Aliya Mohsin Somji, an audiology student at Aston University, UK, presents a picture from the perspective of those receiving such support, in her home country of Tanzania.

Several organisations are specifically concerned with hearing loss and deafness in children and Paige Stringer, Founder / Executive Director, Global Foundation For Children With Hearing Loss calls for a coherent approach to raising international awareness of an easily prevented and treated condition.

In the UK, a number of organisations have come under one umbrella to promote a greater recognition of the impact of hearing loss and deafness at a policy level. Evidence demonstrating the impact of hearing loss and deafness on the health and well-being of individuals is growing but this is largely unrecognised by policy makers.

This is also the role of patients involved in NICE who act as a critical friend to the Department of Health in the UK and help raise areas of concern to government and the wider public.

It is axiomatic to say that we have huge inequalities internationally in healthcare. However, the impact of hearing loss is a global burden on society that is severely underestimated by governments. We can see from the work showcased here, that huge endeavours are being made to address this but, as both Mark and Paige stress, without a coherent, co-ordinated approach organisations concerned to improve the health and well-being of millions of people will have a minimal impact.



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**Declaration of
Competing Interests**
Paige Stringer is the
Founder and Executive
Director of the Global
Foundation For Children
With Hearing Loss.

Let's Start Spreading the News

Children with hearing loss can learn to listen and talk. Yet, most of the world is unaware of this potential. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that hearing loss is one of the most common disabilities globally, yet one of the least supported. Gaps in hearing healthcare and education resources for these children are particularly magnified in developing countries. Hearing screening, follow-up therapy, and education support is not widely available. Just one in four people in developing countries that need a hearing aid receive one (WHO). Much of the developing world provides children who are deaf or hard of hearing with just a secondary level education – if at all. All of these factors limit the future employment opportunities and quality of life for these children, and they often end up dependent on society for support. This significant financial burden for the developing world is so unnecessary

because it can be overcome. Half of all cases of hearing loss are avoidable through prevention, early diagnoses, and management (WHO). We need to get the word out.

Many organisations work globally to address the issue of paediatric hearing loss. We would be well served to work together on a cohesive and well-funded international campaign, highlighting what can be done. Increased awareness and investment in newborn hearing screening, affordable hearing instruments, and access to trained education and therapy professionals would make a significant difference in so many children's lives. With such resources and support, children with hearing loss could develop the cognitive and spoken language skills they need to join their hearing peers in school. They could grow up to become independent, contributing members of their hearing communities – no matter where in the world they live. ■

Humanitarian project round-up

Instituto Cefac

Instituto Cefac from São Paulo, Brazil is a non-profit organisation which was founded in 1999 by Dr Irene Marchesan and Dr Jaime Zorzi with the aim of providing free assessment and treatment for low income children and adults with communication disorders. To date it has provided free assistance to more than 11,000 people. Most of its staff is formed by volunteers who are speech and language pathologists, audiologists, psychologists and educators. Instituto Cefac is also a key partner on social development projects such as Solar Ear (www.solarear.org.br) and the Individualmente project (www.individualmente.com.br). As part of its activities, the NGO welcomes speech and language pathologists and audiologists from



a variety of countries in Latin America and Portugal for capacity building and exchange of professional experiences. Instituto Cefac also publishes a free online Journal on

Communication Disorders, which can be found at: www.revistacefac.com.br/. For the future, its plans are to extend the services to a larger number of people and to strengthen the impact of professional capacity building in the area of communication disorders. We invite the scientific community to send us articles in Portuguese, Spanish or English and we welcome partnerships with international institutions interested on professional exchange programs and/or social development projects on human communication disorders. ■

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The Colorado Audiology Mission to China

Beginning in 2007, the Colorado audiology missions were organised by Soaring Hope Inc, a non-profit organisation established by Dr Ada Chen, a nutritionist and Dr Yung-Hai Chen, an engineer, who have been organising medical missions to China for 15 years. The Liaoning Provincial Caring for the Next Generation Committee suggested that a mission focusing on hearing and paediatrics would be beneficial to this area of China, which is an industrial and agricultural region

with a lot of poverty.

Our fourth trip in 2011 to Luoyang in the Henan Province is being organised by Soaring Hope and the Huaqiao Foundation established by Frank Yih. At the school for the deaf in Luoyang we will provide hearing tests, ear moulds, hearing aids, solar batteries, and instruction for the audiometric technicians and teachers. We fit as many children as we can, and teach their teachers to provide auditory skill develop-

ment and speech development.

If you are interested in participating in our trips or by helping us collect hearing aids, please contact Prof Christine Yoshinaga-Itano. ■

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Cubex bring Digital Hearing solutions to the Himalayas

Since 2001, Cubex has supported the Britain-Nepal Otology Service (BRINOS) in helping thousands of Nepalis achieve better hearing. Adam Shulberg, Managing Director of Cubex initiated a hearing aid programme and is responsible for facilitating, training and supervising seven Community Ear workers and over 700 volunteers.

A team of Community Ear Workers and Cubex have now established a hearing aid distribution programme in Western Nepal, offering a sustainable hearing aid distribution service. Each hearing aid has to be fitted individually, with a well fitting ear mould and must be selected so it is appropriate. By training the Primary Ear Care workers in



hearing aid fitting and maintenance Adam has established a fully sustainable hearing aid service.

On their latest trip Adam and Jerusha Shulberg initiated a schools / community screening programme and introduced digital hearing instruments to the Himalayas for the first time. A small ear mould production facility is also in place, where custom moulds can be made for individuals with severe hearing loss.

Our next team hope to depart for Nepal in November 2011 so please, send us your used hearing aids one or two months before, to give us enough time to check, clean and repair them. ■

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Peter Bartlett removing wax with Lumniview in Gusu village, Malawi.

Judith Francis, Secretary, EARS Inc,
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EARS Incorporated

EARS Inc. was established in Australia in 1999 by a group of Christian hearing healthcare professionals and others, who saw a need to train and equip local workers in developing countries. Through a sustainable capacity development model, EARS Inc. aims to assist and empower those with hearing impairment. Rather than simply co-ordinate short-term clinics to fit hearing aids, EARS Inc. projects involving volunteer audiologists, audiometrists and ENTs, include the provision of: audiological equipment and hearing aids, skills training, hearing loss awareness and prevention education, and hearing rehabilitation programmes.

Donna Carkeet moved to the Dominican Republic in 2005 as the first permanent EARS Inc. volunteer audiologist, to support a hospital audiology department and establish the country's first training facility for audiologists. Donna and her dozen students now run two hearing clinics, a hearing loss prevention and detection outreach program, and OAE/tympanometry screenings with the vaccination program. Last August, audiologists Peter and Rebecca Bartlett established a hearing clinic in Lilongwe, Malawi and became the first audiologists registered in the country. Their aim is to provide a full range of audiology services, support for teachers of the deaf in integrated and specialist schools, outreach clinics and a training facility to develop audiology skills in local workers.

To receive a regular newsletter, become an EARS Inc. member or find out more about our projects in the Philippines, Egypt and the Dominican Republic, contact our Secretary Judith Francis. ■

The Global Foundation For Children With Hearing Loss

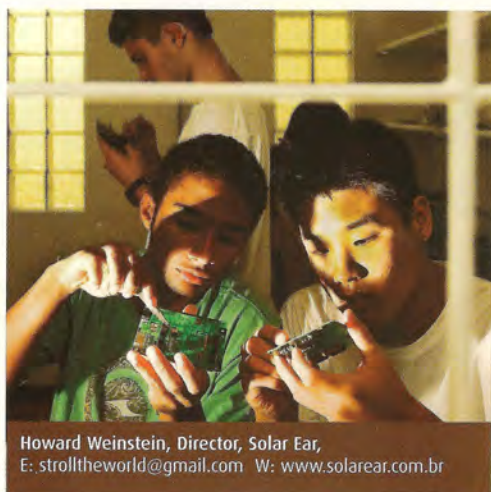
The Foundation is committed to providing deaf or hard of hearing children in developing countries with the technology and education they need to achieve their full potential.

In collaboration with Thuan An Centre and Ho Chi Minh City University, Vietnam, we are conducting a multi-year Deaf Education Programme. The programme prepares teachers, families, and medical teams to help children with hearing loss develop listening and spoken language skills in the first six years of life. Our team of volunteer professionals in audiology, speech pathology, and deaf education share their expertise with teachers and families representing 35 schools across 20 Vietnam provinces during Summer Training Workshops and Mobile Missions to participating schools during the school year. Our audiologists also draw on our Hearing Aid Program to fit hearing aids on children who need them. We are expanding to Vietnam's hospitals to train medical teams about audiology and early intervention support. Participants in our program share learning with others, making our efforts multiplicative and sustainable. We plan to extend our model of training and hearing aid distribution to other developing countries. ■



Foundation professional demonstrates an auditory-verbal teaching technique.

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Solar Ear

Solar Ear manufactures low cost rechargeable digital BTE hearing aids, by people who are deaf for hearing impaired children. A battery is often not accessible to those living outside the capital of developing countries. We developed a rechargeable battery which costs about \$2 and lasts two to three years.

Given 300 million people need a hearing aid and given no organisation has the money, distribution network nor infrastructure to meet this demand, we not only encourage other companies to copy

our technology but we are also helping other NGOs replicate our sustainable business model. Over the next five years, we will have 11 independent operations serving over 60 developing countries.

Reducing disposal of used batteries and lowering the HIV-AIDS rate in deaf communities have been other outcomes. Our latest programme with deaf Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian youths working together will hopefully have a peace building dividend. We hope to scale this programme to Kosovo and Kashmir. ■

Healing the Children

Healing the Children (HTC), from Seattle, Washington, USA has been working in eight different towns and villages in Guatemala twice a year for the last seven years. Medical teams of audiologists, otolaryngologists and support personnel have been providing diagnostic testing, hearing aids and ear, nose and throat surgeries to poor children. The teams have fit over 1,200 children with hearing aids. Additionally, the audiologists have identified and trained personnel in three different locations in the country to provide follow-up care for the children with hearing aids. The audio techs perform hearing aid checks, replace earmoulds and provide family training on hearing aid maintenance and communication strategies education.

All HTC team members pay their own expenses. Additionally each audiologist contributes \$500 towards the cost of follow-up care for the children with the audio techs. We welcome audiologists and otolaryngologists that wish to volunteer. ■



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The Juvenile Organization of Speech and Hearing

Co-founded by audiologist Devangi Dalal and Senior ENT Surgeon Dr Jayant Gandhi in 2004, the Juvenile Organization of Speech and Hearing (JOSH) has since fitted more than 250 hearing impaired children with hearing aids, provided by Danish manufacturer Widex.

Many hearing impaired children have not developed normal speech abilities and this has kept them from participating fully in the education system. This changes once the children are fitted with a hearing aid and are provided with additional training from JOSH.

Small public speaking competitions are held to motivate the children and improve their confidence.

In addition, by bringing knowledge to local communities, JOSH helps reduce prejudice against hearing impaired and creates a greater awareness of hearing loss, which can lead to more children being diagnosed earlier in their life, thus making it easier for them to overcome the challenges ahead of them. ■



Manasi Gokhale is 22 years old and thanks to her hearing aids she is today able to work as a designer trainee despite her profound hearing disability.

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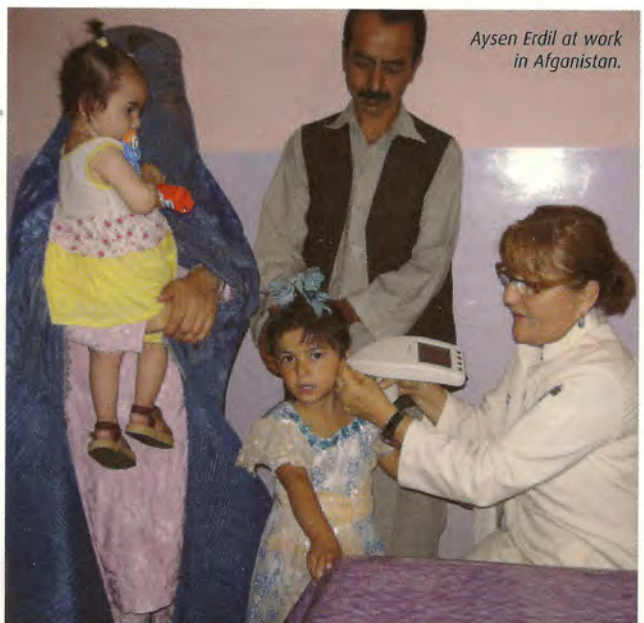
SYMBIOSIS – Health and Nature Volunteers

Members of our NGO have been travelling to remote rural areas in Turkey since 1999, performing health scans for children and educating them to become aware of health issues for themselves and their environment; nature and all living things.

Our doctors (a paediatrician, ENT, ophthalmologist, dentist, urologist, dermatologist, family doctors) perform the health screenings. Audiologists carry out hearing screening for preschools and 1st and 2nd grades to identify impairments which are not apparent. We use otoacoustic emissions and recently we also started using the MAGIC play audiometry system for young children.

Outside Turkey we have been to Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Kosovo. Our project 'First Lullaby' – starting a Newborn Hearing Screening programme in Kosovo is continuing; we have three more districts to cover.

We have reached to almost 20,000 children and are working on three projects for 2011. One in four villages at Gallipoli and the others in the Eastern part of Turkey. We have another project for training midwifery in Afghanistan which has stopped because of security reasons. We are anxiously waiting to proceed when conditions are better. ■



Aysen Erdil at work in Afghanistan.

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