

FORUM

NEW LOW COST DEVICE BOOSTS MILD HEARING LOSS

NEW ORLEANS — More than 16 million Americans suffer from hearing loss. Approximately 70% have uncorrected hearing problems. Many of these people resist purchasing hearing aids because of cost, vanity, lack of confidence in their performance, et cetera.

At Stanford Medical Center in Palo Alto, CA a new device has been developed which improves the hearing of people with a mild loss. According to Richard L. Goode, M.D., Associate Professor of Otolaryngology, "people who have difficulty hearing in large rooms, soft voices, and when there is background noise can be helped by the Earesonator, regardless of the cause of hearing loss—age, excessive noise exposure, hereditary problems, congenital abnormalities, damage or disease. There are more than 1 million Americans with this type of borderline disability. They do not want the bother or expense of a hearing aid because their problem exists only in a limited number of situations. The Earesonator is an alternative."

Hearing aids cost up to \$400. The Earesonator costs \$50, which is less than the annual cost of batteries for most hearing aids. (It uses no batteries.)

The Earesonator was displayed and demonstrated for the first time at the American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery's Annual Meeting, held at the Rivergate Exhibition Center in New Orleans, October 17-21. Approximately 4,000 otolaryngologists and other interested parties attended the meeting. In addition to scientific exhibits such as this, the five day program also included 280 instructional courses, general scientific sessions, technical exhibits, and scientific poster presentations.

The Earesonator is a clear plastic all in the ear bubble. By changing the opening size and volume of the concha (the shell-shaped cavity of the external ear) the resonant frequency is moved down. This increases amplification only in the higher speech frequency range. The Earesonator is different in this way from hearing aids, which increase amplification in all frequency ranges. For that reason, hearing aids can be distracting to the wearer who hears louder background noise, in addition to louder speech.

Most people require two Earesonators, one for each ear. Each device is custom fitted and tuned to provide the maximum amplification at the frequency the patient needs most. At present, Earesonators are available to individual patients of the Stanford Medical Center. According to Dr. Goode, "Stanford does not wish to manufacture the device. If we find broad acceptance by otolaryngologists, audiologists and hearing aid dealers, and if our patients continue being pleased with the results, we will encourage a commercial company to manufacture and distribute Earesonators nationwide."

—American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery, Inc.

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Western Maryland College and Helen Keller National Center For Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults have recently announced a unique program for the preparation of professionals to work with deaf-blind adults. The program is a joint effort and provisional accreditation by ADARA has been offered with the expectation that full accreditation will be earned in 1984. The program leads to a master's degree with a variety of field concentrations. For complete information, write for information about the M.S. program in deaf-blindness to:

Office of Graduate Studies
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