

HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss is, as we all know, one of the symptoms of Meniere's disease. For those in the early stages of Meniere's, the hearing loss is only evident around the time of a vertigo attack – and one has more pressing things to worry about then!

If Meniere's progresses, then the hearing loss progresses also – only in one ear, if you never get Meniere's in the other ear. So some Meniere's people would perhaps not attend to the problem of hearing loss, which is a pity, as there are very good resources and avenues of help for those with hearing loss.

In this issue of your newsletter, we are publishing articles on support groups for people with hearing loss, and articles on strategies to cope with hearing loss.

If you have some noticeable hearing loss, or if you have been told that your hearing has been affected by your Meniere's, consider joining a local support group. You will learn strategies to cope with hearing loss, and you will benefit from the support of others in similar situations. And you will meet some very fine people!

David Brigden, Editor

The Invisible Handicap

Hearing loss is called the 'invisible handicap' because there are no easily apparent symptoms. Yet four million Australians suffer from some degree of hearing loss. There are many causes of hearing loss – exposure to loud noise, certain drugs, diseases, accidents and simple old age.

Farmers, musicians, factory workers and others frequently exposed to loud noise are likely to find their hearing worn out as they get older. Even young people who walk around with loud music in their ears risk losing their hearing.

SHHH (Self Help for the Hard of Hearing) is a volunteer organisation that provides unbiased information and support for those who make the unfortunate discovery that they are hard of hearing.

There are many ways in which hearing impairment can be managed to provide continued quality of life. Digital hearing aids, cochlear implants and a range of assistive listening devices often solve difficulties in hearing the television, the phone and the family. Communication skills and speech reading can be learnt. Tinnitus (a ringing or buzzing in the ears) may be controlled.

Richard Brading has had a severe hearing loss since his inner ear was damaged by a virus at the age of 25. Thanks to modern technology and the assistance of SHHH, Richard has been able to continue his work as a lawyer, as well as being a dedicated father of three daughters.

Richard said "even with an active family, hearing loss sometimes makes me feel isolated from the world. It's good to be able to share my experiences with others who are hearing impaired, and realise that I am not the only one."

However hearing loss can have its advantages. Richard admitted that he takes his hearing aids out when the children get a bit too noisy and enjoys a bit of peace and quiet.

Wadjasay?

"At a recent meeting, I was sitting in the front row and I couldn't understand much of what was being said. Could I have a hearing loss?"

If this sounds familiar, you are experiencing one of the signs of a hearing loss. There are others. Ask yourself the following questions. Do you...

- Often ask people to repeat what they say ?
- Give inappropriate responses ?
- Watch a speaker intently to hear ?
- Frequently mispronounce words ?
- Fail to hear someone talking from behind you ?
- Turn up the volume on the TV or radio ?
- Have difficulty on the phone ?
- Have trouble hearing your alarm clock ?

If you answer "yes" to some you may have a hearing loss. To be sure, speak to your doctor or contact an audiologist or other hearing professional for a hearing test.

For more information on managing hearing loss:

call SHHH on: **(02) 9144 7586**

or visit:

<http://www.shhhaust.org>

SHHH has groups operating in the following localities: Baulkham Hills, Chatswood, Epping, Hurstville, Blue Mountains (Lawson), Orange, and Hunter (Broadmeadow). There are also two information centres, at Turrumurra and Canterbury. Phone for more details (02 9144 7586) or email (shhh@netspace.net.au).

Are you interested in forming a new group in your area? SHHH has a wonderful groups coordinator, Barry Collins. While SHHH welcomes more metropolitan and regional groups in NSW, if you are outside NSW why not start a trend and form a group in your area?

