

Audiology Newsletter

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Christmas 2010

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CHRISTMAS CLOSURE DATES:

21st December 2010-
10th January 2011

21st January 2011—
2nd February 2011

Noise Trap Restaurants



Many restaurants hit every fashionable trend in restaurant design. The floors are hardwood, the ceiling beams exposed, and the wood tables bare. There is music playing through surround sound speakers. They have open kitchens and a large bar and some even have a wall of windows to enhance the outside view. The result: they are the ultimate noise trap. The wooden floors, linen-free tables, high ceilings and lots of windows all cause sound to ricochet around what are essentially hard-surfaced echo chambers. Upmarket restaurants have gradually done away with carpeting, heavy curtains and tablecloths over the past decade, saying such touches are out of sync with today's informal diner. However those features were also sound absorbing.

Diners worried they will end up in a noisy restaurant may want to play defence with a few strategies:

- Sit at tables in alcoves, which provide a barricade against sound waves;
- Avoid sitting by the bar or kitchen;
- Avoid sitting near large parties, who tend to talk louder;
- Ask for additional light and look at your dining companion. Without realising it, we read lips.
- Ask staff to turn the music down, even if you get dirty looks. Not only does this reduce noise, but people will then talk more softly.
- Look at photos (via Google internet search) of the restaurant ahead of time. No carpet or tablecloths and boxy dimensions should raise red flags.

Some restaurateurs are listening to customer feedback—customers want to have a conversation over dinner and will not want to go back if it is too loud. With this in mind, it is becoming increasingly more common that restaurant designers consult acoustical experts during the design process.

Commuters and Serenity

If you're the type of commuter whose blood boils when an iPhone-enabled teen gets on your train and blasts you with the latest Lady Gaga hit, take heart. The "quiet carriage" is on the way in Queensland's south-east.

The state government is trialling the concept for three months, following complaints from commuters that mobile music and other devices are shattering their serenity. Those in the last carriage of all trains will be asked not to talk loudly or use mobile phones and other noisy devices via, ironically, on-board announcements. Posters will also ask commuters not to have loud conversations or use portable music players and other noisy devices in the last carriage. "This trial initiative will allow commuters to read a book, work on their laptop or simply enjoy a quiet atmosphere while traveling to and from work," Transport Minister Rachel Nolan said.

But it seems there'll be no penalty for breaking the cone of silence. Other than a displeased, "Shhhhh", from commuters contentedly reading or staring out the window in silence. "This initiative can only be successful through the courtesy and consideration of all commuters," Ms Nolan said.

"This is an important initiative in the broad sense as it is also a signal that there are considerate behavioural expectations when traveling on public transport for the benefit of the overall community."



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A New World of Sound

Nature has given us two ears designed to work together. Hearing aid manufacturers are now releasing hearing aids that, like two ears, communicate with each other instantly and constantly. The hearing aids communicate with each other wirelessly.

New Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)

Hearing aids—via a uniquely designed range of accessories—are allowing listeners to more easily handle some of the more difficult listening situations such as watching television, listening to music or using a mobile phone.

ALDs can wirelessly connect a mobile phone to a hearing aid, or a television set to a hearing aid. The ALDs switch off the hearing aid microphones and ensures no surrounding sound interferes with the television program or mobile phone conversation.

ALDs are using Bluetooth technology to achieve this. However, Bluetooth technology cannot be shrunk in size to be an integrated feature of a hearing aid. Therefore, the ALD is a separate device that must be worn or carried in addition to wearing hearing aids.

Some users understandably find having to have and manually use yet another device a hassle. As such, sales of these devices remain relatively low and in turn is ensuring much research is being concentrated in determining how to incorporate both hearing aid and Bluetooth technology in to an acceptably sized hearing aid.

Ethical Doubts Over Optical Sales (The Australian, August 28, 2010)

Australian Medical Association (AMA) president Andrew Pesce says optometrists working for optical retailers face a potential conflict of interest.

Dr Pesce says this is due to the corporate emphasis on selling prescription glasses. Echoing the sentiment of some independent optometrists, Dr Pesce said those working for a retail company in a sector worth \$1.2 billion posed some ethical questions.

“It sets up a conflict of interest,” said Dr Pesce, while admitting he has not seen any evidence suggesting glasses are being over-prescribed. “There’s always that type of concern.”

About 40 percent of the nation’s 3500 optometrists work for two big players: Luxottica—which owns OPSM, Laubman & Pank and Budget Eyewear—and Specsavers.

Specsavers managing director Peter Larsen said many of the company’s optometrists owned part of their store and were as concerned about their patients as independent health professionals.

Adelaide independent optometrist Kevin Rooney has been concerned about the rising number of corporate optometrists for a decade. “The advantage of being independent is that the patient comes first,” Mr Rooney said. “There isn’t that emphasis on selling a pair of glasses.”

Andrew Harris, president of the Optometrists Association of Australia, said that although there would always be ethical questions about the commercial nature of the industry, very few complaints had been made about optometrists. “There is a requirement for any professional to look after the interests of their client,” he said. “No matter where you work, there’s going to be potential conflicts of interest.”



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Sale of National Hearing Care (NHC)

Amplifon S.p.A., the Italian-based worldwide leader in the distribution and fitting of hearing aids and related services, has signed a definitive agreement to acquire 100 percent of the Australian group NHC Group Pty Ltd, a leading Australian distributor of hearing aid solutions.

The transaction is for cash consideration in the amount of A\$460 million.

NHC has a network of approximately 200 shops in Australia, New Zealand and India. NHC employs 240 audiologists. NHC has a particularly strong position in Australia, where it operates 102 shops and holds a 16% market share and in New Zealand where, under the NHC (15 shops) and Bay Audiology (63 shops) brands it has a 45% market share.

NHC also recently expanded in India, where it currently operates 11 shops.

NHC was previously owned by private equity funds Crescent Capital Partners and Macquarie Group.

The strategic acquisition allows the Amplifon Group to enter an important new geographic market which provides significant potential for growth.

Vuvuzela

The 2010 Soccer World Cup introduced the world to the *Vuvuzela*—the African horn that caused much controversy due to its unique sound and intensity. The Vuvuzela is blown by most South African soccer supporters. It is a proud symbol of South African soccer, having evolved over the past 15 years into a symbol of hope and unity for many people in the country.

Traditionally made from a kudu horn, the Vuvuzela was used to call together meetings and could be heard by distant peoples summoned to attend. Today soccer stadiums in South Africa are invariably filled with its loud and raucous sound, which reverberates with energy to the exhilaration of supporters.

Despite complaints by international commentators, players and audiences, FIFA approved the Vuvuzela as part of the signature South African World Cup.

A Vuvuzela can have an average output range of 113 dBA and 131 dBA. According to South African occupational noise exposure legislation, at the lowest intensity of 113 dBA people should not be exposed for more than one minute without hearing protection. This places all bystanders within a two metre radius in the severe risk category for permanent hearing loss.

If a single Vuvuzela emits a sound that is dangerously loud to those in at least a two metre radius, the cumulative effect of numerous Vuvuzelas, typically blown together for the duration of a soccer match, may have an additive effect, putting spectators at a significant risk of noise-induced hearing loss.

The Vuvuzela has reached iconic status and should be kept as part of the South African soccer culture, but measures to protect spectators' hearing must be considered of paramount importance.

iPhone & iPad Free Audiology Apps

For those with a Smartphone (e.g. iPhone and Blackberry mobile phones) or an iPad, you can download not just the latest weather forecast, local restaurant reviews and contact details, currency conversions, up-to-minute sport scores, etc etc but you can also download for free information about hearing loss, hearing aids, and hearing myths.

Simply access the iTunes website to download the following recommended Apps:

Apps for iPhones:

- uHear
- Senses—What U Hear?
- Starkey T² Remote
- U Hear FR

Apps for iPads:

- Senses—What U Hear?
- S Series iQ Healthcare & Fitness
- Hearing Loss Simulator
- Imagine VS Healthcare & Fitness

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It is a privilege to be entrusted with your hearing needs. I continue to achieve my goal of remaining independent from any hearing aid manufacturer. I value the relationships I have with my clients. I always welcome your feedback.

I wish you and your families a happy, safe and festive Christmas. I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year.

Warmest Regards,

Bronwen

CHRISTMAS CLOSURE

Please note, during the Christmas period the rooms will be closed from Tuesday 21st December, 2010 and reopen on Monday 10th January, 2011.

The rooms will also be closed Friday 21st January–Tuesday 2nd February, 2011.



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