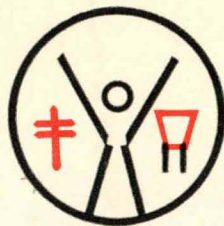


# NEWS BULLETIN



# The Sanatorium Board of Manitoba

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## Spreading The Facts About Hearing Aids

Within the next month or so a six-page pamphlet about hearing tests and hearing aid evaluations will be distributed to the offices of ear specialists and to some health agencies throughout the province. This pamphlet — compiled and published by the Sanatorium Board of Manitoba — is designed to answer many of the questions commonly asked by people who have major hearing difficulties. *How do I get a hearing test? What is involved in a hearing aid evaluation? What does a hearing aid do?* — are several of the problems dealt with in as simple terms as possible.

There are, however, a lot of problems connected with hearing aids that space wouldn't permit us to discuss at length. One of them concerns the fact that among the thousands of people who have major hearing handicaps, only 10 percent actually use a hearing aid.

Why have people not obtained this



"You don't need to shout. I can hear you! . . ."

### Speech Reading

The fact that a hearing aid proves to be of little or no use does not mean a closed door to further assistance. Speech reading (lip reading), as Mr. Person points out, admittedly requires a lot of patient, hard work, but in the end it means a richer life in which the individual can communicate quite effectively with his fellows.

In many instances, he continues, the hard of hearing begin to learn the art of speech reading without being aware of it. Because their inability to hear all sounds may occur so gradually over the years, they very often do not realize the full magnitude of their loss; yet unconsciously they begin to compensate for it by watching for the cue expressions on the faces of those they talk with.

It is not uncommon, therefore, that

as most of us know, is that some individuals purchase hearing aids without proper medical and professional direction; then learn too late that they cannot benefit from them, or at least from the particular model they have been sold.

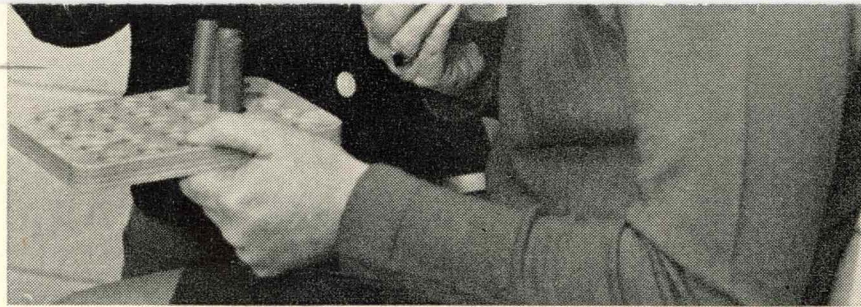
Another reason, according to J. Brayton Person, head of the Department of Communication Disorders at the Manitoba Rehabilitation Hospital, is that a good number of the hard of hearing are very reluctant to reveal their hearing loss and often go to extremes in attempting to conceal it.

To make matters worse, a number of manufacturers and salesmen have fostered and encouraged this attitude by stressing concealment (in eye glass frames, in the hair, behind the ears) as the most important feature of the modern hearing aid. "Nothing shows" in many instances gets far greater promotion than quality or performance of the instrument.

"It is most unfortunate," Mr. Person added, "that the misleading advertising of a few inferior hearing aid dealers casts a shadow over the entire industry, and on the reputable people who handle good instruments and do not misrepresent the purpose of their products."

#### Not a Miracle Instrument

Some people have the mistaken idea that a hearing aid will "cure" a hearing loss. "There is no magic in the little instrument," Mr. Person stresses. "Essentially the hearing aid does only one thing: it makes sounds louder. And like normal hearing ears, it picks up impartially all the sounds that it hears — that is, clear speech, slurred speech, background



(Photo by Portugal)

noise, music, and in general, all the humming, buzzing confusion of the world around us."

Thus, just as one does with the normal ear, the individual who uses a hearing aid must learn to select from this sea of noise only those sounds or voices he wishes to attend to. To be able to do so will take at least a month of patient practice in the majority of cases; and for others, who have a hearing loss of long standing, it will likely take much longer.

#### Some Won't Benefit

Just as it is true that not all visual impairments can be "corrected" by wearing eye glasses, it is also sadly true that some people with a severe hearing impairment will never benefit from any kind of hearing aid.

For the greater percentage of people who experience a natural loss of hearing in later life, a hearing aid will be of little or no use, says Mr. Person. The hearing defects that come with advancing age are probably the most common type of hearing loss in our society and one that is certain to become more prevalent as our population continues to "age." In such instances, elderly persons may very easily hear low pitched sounds around

them and some components of the human voice; but the higher pitched sounds, as for example some of the consonants in speech, cannot be heard.

"I hear, but I do not understand" is a confession that the elderly will make to a physician or audiologist; but more often than not they will admit nothing to their families for fear they will be thought "stupid or senile." So they may go from day to day, half understanding or not understanding at all, while their families, in increasing frustration, raise their voices higher and higher.

the first to recognize the hearing problem.

#### A Common Problem

Loss of hearing is one of the most common chronic impairments in society today. It is estimated that there are about 50,000 people in our province who have hearing impairments of varying degrees of severity. For roughly one half of them, the problem is serious enough to warrant the attention of the ear specialist. A smaller percentage will require the assistance of the clinical audiologist.

Disturbances in hearing also have a far greater impact on day-to-day life than almost any other handicap, for they intimately touch and concern the vital link of communication between man and man. As Helen Keller once explained: "I am just as deaf as I am blind . . . Deafness is a much worse misfortune for it means the loss of the most vital stimulus — the sound of the voice that brings language, sets thoughts astir and keeps us in the intellectual company of men."

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Address all communications to:

THE EDITOR, SBM NEWS BULLETIN,  
800 Sherbrook Street, Winnipeg 2, Manitoba

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