

Sound News

June 2014

Volume 27 number 6

Virus Could Cure Hearing Loss

Helen Thomson, New Scientist April 2014

You've heard of gene therapy for diseases and cancers. But what about gene therapy for sensory disorders, like deafness? In 2003, scientists discovered that some genes can transform certain ear cells into the hair cells that, when vibrated, generate the electrical activity that awakens your brain to the world of sound. Last year, Hinrich Staecker at the University of Kansas Medical Center and his colleagues inserted one of those genes, *Atoh1*, into a harmless virus and injected it into the cochlea (a part of the inner ear) of mice. They found that two months later, the mice's hearing had improved by about 20 decibels—approximately equivalent to the difference between covering and uncovering your ears with your hands.

In the next month, researchers will expose volunteers with severe hearing loss to a new kind of gene therapy first tested in mice. Now Hinrich and his team will test the procedure on humans—specifically, 45 volunteers with severe hearing loss.

Here's Helen Thomson writing for New Scientist

The trial will start at the University of Kansas Medical School before being widened to other institutions. As with the mice, the team will inject the viral gene package directly into the volunteers' cochlea by peeling back their ear drum and passing a needle through a tiny hole made by a laser. The *Atoh1* gene should reach the supporting cells, instructing them to divide and form new hair cells. Results are expected between two weeks and two months later.

"Today's medical treatments are largely limited to hearing aids and cochlear implants, which are essentially just sticking plasters," says Ralph Holme, head of biomedical research at UK charity Action on Hearing Loss. "This is why the planned trial is extremely encouraging and offers hope to the millions affected by hearing loss that a cure is possible."

Unfortunately, the procedure wouldn't help people with congenital deafness because they don't have the innate ear structures necessary to support the growth of hair cells. But it could still revolutionize the lives of up to 7 million people with acquired hearing loss in the United States alone, giving them access to the very subtle acoustic cues that implants or hearing aids can't provide.

Jeffrey Holt at Harvard Medical School, who isn't involved in the trial, calls it ground-breaking and says he is cautiously optimistic about the work. "Hopes are high that the trial will yield positive results without introducing unnecessary complications."

The only expected side effect is a brief period of dizziness or nausea, a common occurrence after ear surgery. In pre-clinical tests, Novartis researchers looked to see if the virus spread to any other tissues, but found it was restricted to the site of injection. It has also been designed to have limited potential to recombine with the volunteer's DNA so it is unlikely to cause problems elsewhere.

"Many other species, such as fish and birds, can regenerate the hair cells in their inner ear over time and create new auditory circuits," says Klickstein. "We're just trying to tweak the mammalian system a little bit to do what a lot of other species do naturally".



Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

You can do it! I know you can!

There are people all around you who need help with their hearing loss.

Give them our Survivor's Manual.

Share our newsletter.

Invite them to a meeting.

Meet them for coffee and get to know them.



Leone

Loud music damages the nerves in the brain

Loud music on headphones has the same effect on nerves as multiple sclerosis and causes hearing loss.

Loud music played on earphones causes hearing loss by having a similar effect on nerves as multiple sclerosis, research finds. The research shows that noise levels above 110 decibels strip insulation from nerve fibers carrying signals from the ear to the brain. Loss of the protective coating, called myelin, disrupts electrical nerve signals.

The same process, this time due to an attack from the immune system, damages nerves in the brain and results in multiple sclerosis.

It is well known that loud noises can lead to hearing problems such as temporary hearing loss or tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and even permanent hearing loss. But this is the first time scientists have been able to identify damages to nerve cells as a result of noise exposure.

Hearing can recover

Scientists found that myelin loss, as a result of noise exposure, re-grows in time, meaning hearing can recover.

The work is part of ongoing research into the effects of loud noises on the cochlea nucleus, a brainstem region that receives sound signals from the inner ear. Based on these results, scientists may be able to develop a future treatment method.

The results are published in the scientific journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Members: if you have changed your e-mail address please notify Karin Smith of the change karinsm@efn.org

Hearing Loss Assoc.-Lane County, Oregon Information calls are taken by Linda Diaz 790-1290

HLA A is published monthly for members of Hearing Loss Association of Lane County.

Annual chapter fee of \$10.00 can be mailed to HLA-LCO Inc. PO Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402

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National website: www.hearingloss.org
Oregon website: www.hearinglossOR.org



Out & About

Leone Miller led a workshop on hearing loss at her church. Three churches sent a person and all took Survivors' Manuals. **Andrea Cabral** attended an OSU Gerontology Conference & gave out 1 box of Survivor's Manuals.

Communicating as a hard of hearing mother *Gael Hannan* Is my unborn baby making any sounds that I'm not hearing?

I don't think so. When your baby is born, the noise will start, so enjoy the peace of pregnancy.

How will I hear my baby crying at night?

The easiest method, is to have a hearing partner. Don't get me wrong; I'm not suggesting that baby-making-partners should be chosen for their ability to hear well, because there are many things more irksome in a spouse than hearing loss. (Inattentiveness and leaving the toilet seat up jump to mind.) But hearing spouses can be very useful in detecting a baby's cry. They respond by lifting their head off the pillow to confirm that it's the baby and not the cat, then they jab you in the ribs, saying, "Honey, baby's crying..." If you prefer to be awakened by a flashing light rather than a sharp elbow, use a baby monitor, an alerting system or a combination of the two to help you respond to your child. My daughter-in-law uses a video baby monitor, which I could have used years ago when my toddler decided to try climbing out of the crib by himself. I walked in just in time to find him tottering lengthwise along the rail, flying like an airplane, both excited and terrified.

I have trouble understanding other people's children with their high voices.

I'm nervous that I'll have difficulty understanding my own child!

While I don't want to trivialize or underestimate the communication challenges that you will most certainly have from time to time, this is your child and hearing loss will not prevent the two of you from connecting and communicating. You will always watch the face of your child for the information you can't hear, and your baby will thrive on a parent who is focused and caring. Your daughter will learn how to get your attention. Your son will discover how to communicate what he needs or wants from you. You will understand your child because you love your child and will do what it takes to keep communication flowing both ways.

Reach out to your hearing local health organization or association such as HLAA. Some of this advice helps Grandma's too.!

Thank you to Marilyn Edwards for her donation to our chapter.

We're saddened to report the passing of **Lloyd Bissell**, a faithful member of our chapter for many years. He was loyal and devoted to HLAA-Lane taking on tasks that benefited the Chapter almost to the end. His "can do" spirit survives him.

New Survivor's Manuals –FREE to Anyone. Donations appreciated.

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Sound News is a publication of HLA Lane Co and is published monthly. P.O. Box 22501 Eugene OR 97402

Keeping Your Batteries Charged



Information You Can Use

Certain types of nutrition may protect against hearing loss, among these, folate, omega-3 and vitamin A.

Cardiovascular and hearing health are connected. A healthy cardiovascular system positively affects hearing. Conversely, inadequate blood flow and trauma to the blood vessels of the inner ear can contribute to hearing loss. Some experts believe that because the inner ear is so sensitive to blood flow, it is possible that abnormalities in the cardiovascular system could be noted here earlier than in other less sensitive parts of the body—making the ear a kind of "window to the heart."

People with diabetes are about twice as likely to have hearing loss as those without it.

Recent studies show a link between hearing loss and dementia, leading many experts to stress the importance of addressing hearing loss. One study found that seniors with hearing loss are significantly more likely to develop dementia over time than those who retain their hearing. Another found that hearing loss is associated with accelerated cognitive decline in older adults, and that those with hearing loss are more likely to develop problems thinking and remembering than older adults whose hearing is normal.

People who don't address hearing loss are more prone to depression. People with hearing loss who use hearing aids often have fewer depressive symptoms, greater social engagement, and improved quality of life.

Above comments: Duane Smelser

If you are going out to eat with ONE person, and you know the restaurant will be noisy! Here is a solution.

Pocketalker Ultra with Neckloop Mini-Lapel Omnidirectional Microphone

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Enjoy your meal and conversation!

This hearing solution works for two people.

The Pocketalker can also be used with a variety of headphones and earphones.

And remember, never leave home without your Pocketalker!

Editor: Talk to people at our meetings about pocket talkers and ask to see on if you don't know what it is.

Members will be receiving a survey call soon from Ken Rivernider regarding interest in having a Picnic on August 14th this year.

WE WOULD APPRECIATE A RESPONSE WHEN KEN CALLS. THANK YOU FROM THE BOARD.

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Membership in HLAA is \$20 student, \$35 individuals, \$45 for couple/family, \$60 professional. It includes the award-winning bi-monthly magazine, *Hearing Loss*. Write HLAA, 7910 Woodmont Ave., Ste. 1200, Bethesda, MD 20814; 301-657-2248 (Voice); 301-657-224 (TTY); 301-913-9413 (Fax) or www.hearingloss.org. Get the latest e-news: <http://www.hearingloss.org/membership/Sen.asp>.

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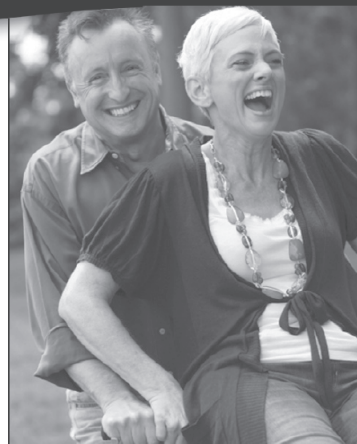
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Hearing Loss Assoc. of Lane County Chapter Fee and National Membership Form

Please fill out this form /survey and turn in at the general meeting or mail to HLA - Lane Co., PO Box 22501, Eugene, OR 97402.

I have enclosed: Chapter fees _____ \$10.00 Chapter Donation of \$ _____
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What most interests/puzzles you about hearing or hearing devices?

Are you interested in volunteering? What would you like to do?

How did you learn about us _____?

Would you like to be on our email news list: _____ Yes _____ No

*Donations to either the national organization or our local chapter are always welcome and are tax deductible. (We do not share our information lists with anyone else. Receipts will gladly be provided.)

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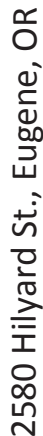
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June 12 7 pm to 9:00 pm Public Welcome

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Dr. Lindsey Yarnell is an audiologist at Eugene Hearing and Speech Center focusing on cochlear implant patients. She received her doctorate in audiology in 2012 from Washington University in St. Louis and completed an externship year at Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York City. Dr. Yarnell makes it a point to stay up to date in cochlear implant technology and advancements in order to better help her patients. Learn about recent developments in cochlear implant technology from all three manufacturers while meeting Dr. Yarnell.

Calendar

Board Meeting June 3
3:30 to 5 pm Members Welcome
Hilyard Community Ctr.
2580 Hilyard St
Eugene

Membership meetings are the 2nd Thursday of the month. They are accessible for all degrees of hearing loss by amplification—loop assistive listening systems.

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