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Happenings

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2015 Hearing Awareness Week Profile - Melbourne Musician Making a Difference to Australia's Hearing Health

Melbourne-based indie musician Siobhan McGinnity is applying her multiple talents to set up Musicians for Hearing to help improve the hearing health of the Melbourne music community. Siobhan is the keyboard player for the highly regarded, Melbourne-based indie rock quartet Sons of Rico.

Sons of Rico

As both an active musician and clinically-qualified audiologist, Siobhan is interested in how musicians and music aficionados could better manage and protect their hearing health.

Through a PhD scholarship provided by the HEARing Cooperative Research Centre (HEARing CRC) at The University of Melbourne, Siobhan is now investigating practical and cost-effective ways to reduce or prevent hearing loss from exposure to high sound levels within live music settings. "My PhD is focused on identifying safe listening behaviours for live music, so it doesn't

impact on either hearing ability or enjoyment of music," Siobhan said.

Exposure to high levels of sound in music and other leisure activities has been recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a major contributor to increasing incidence of hearing disability in young adults. The WHO's Make Listening Safe world-wide campaign is aimed at raising awareness of this risk. With hearing loss expected to affect one in four Australians by 2050, Siobhan sees lack of awareness and education about how exposure to frequent and loud sounds can impact on an individual's hearing as the critical problem.

But Siobhan believes we are beginning to see changes in people's attitudes to hearing loss. "The view that hearing loss is something that only the elderly have to worry about is outdated," she explained.

"The modern reality is that anyone can be affected by hearing loss, including young people who unknowingly expose their ears in noisy environments that can cause the onset of permanent hearing loss and tinnitus a lot earlier in life. We only have one set of ears to last our lifetime and we need to protect and manage our hearing, just as do for vision and other senses."

"Through Musicians for Hearing and the HEARing CRC's HEARsmart initiative, we want to raise awareness in musicians, music lovers and the general public, and to provide the tools to help people assess their individual risk and to adopt safe listening behaviours that will let them enjoy what they love to hear."

"Musicians for Hearing has three aims, to raise money for hearing care in the developing world through music, share that music with the Deaf community and encourage conversation, in particular amongst musicians, about hearing awareness and hearing protection."

Musicians for Hearing will have its first gig to celebrate 2015 Hearing Awareness Week on 23 August at the Gasometer Hotel. The gig has a list of local musicians interested in hearing health including Fraser A Gorman, Alta Lanks and Jim Lawrie. Proceeds from the gig will go to All Ears Cambodia this year.

The HEARing CRC through its HEARsmart Initiative proudly supports Musicians for Hearing.

Unitron and Customers Explore a Changing Hearing Industry Landscape Engage 2015 Global Customer Conference Puts the Focus on Practical Strategies to Evolve Practices and Patient Relationships

September 28, 2015 – *Kitchener, Canada* – Hearing healthcare professionals (HHCPs) are facing a rising tide of change that is impacting the way they manage their practice and interact with patients. This according to a poll of international hearing healthcare practice owners and clinicians gathered at Unitron's Engage 2015, held last week in New Orleans, Louisiana.

"So much is changing in our industry. We are dealing with new competitors for patient mindshare, new technologies, and shifting demographics as patient needs and expectations change and evolve," said Bruce Brown, Vice President of Global Marketing, Unitron in his kick off address to customers who travelled to the 'Big Easy' from across North American and around the globe. "HHCPs are feeling the impact and recognize they need to change how they work and we believe we play an important role providing unique solutions and supporting clinicians through this evolution."

Over the two days, Unitron customers participated in a range of interactive discussions and sessions aimed at providing practical solutions to adapt and succeed in the face of competitive,

technology and patient change. An array of healthcare marketing, customer experience and technology experts addressed such trending topics such as marketing to healthy agers, the patient journey, experience engineering, and technologies for boosting in-clinic success.

Unitron Engage 2015 feature speakers included:

- Edgar Keenhen, author of the Grey Ocean Strategy on the psychology of aging - marketing to the 50+ consumer;
- Dr. Kent Seltman, former Director of Marketing at the Mayo Clinic, on the evolution of a great service brand, and;
- Lou Carbone, CEO of Experience Engineering on the unconscious customer experience and strategies to keep customers coming back again and again.

“It has been an amazing experience to talk with colleagues from around the world about how we are managing our respective businesses,” said Unitron customer Florian Ross, Geschäftsführer of Hörgeräte Reichel. “Engage has reconfirmed we are focusing on the right things with our clients, while providing us with new ideas and perspectives to consider – especially on how we market to our clients.”

“You know a conference is great when the speakers leave you speechless but wanting to change the world,” tweeted Mackenzie Thomas, Audiologist, Alamo ENT Associates. “It really is all about changing behaviors. I now have this burning desire to make changes in the way our team interacts with our patients. From the moment they walk through the door to our clinic we can create a truly differentiated experience for them that sets us apart.

British Society of Audiology Opposes Cuts to NHS Hearing Aid Provision in England

North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) from today (1 October) will cease providing free hearing aids to people with mild hearing loss; this is a first for the NHS, and the British Society of Audiology strongly opposes this rationing, which will impact the lives of several thousand people in the area.

Under the new restrictions, people with moderate hearing loss will also be denied hearing aids if they fail a new eligibility test to be rolled out by the Clinical Commissioning Group, with a further five CCGs in Staffordshire, including Stoke, now looking to implement the same plans, after holding a consultation, in the new year.

Dr Huw Cooper, Chair of the British Society of Audiology said: “These cuts in the provision of hearing aids in Staffordshire run contrary to research and clinical evidence, which clearly shows that hearing aids provide benefits for people with mild to moderate hearing loss. For this predominantly elderly group of patients, the evidence is that withdrawal of hearing aid services will impact directly on their ability to communicate and engage with others, with a wider impact on their health and well-being”.

“The British Society of Audiology, whose role is to provide expert, independent scientific guidance, is opposed to the new policy in North Staffordshire and we are deeply concerned at the

failure of the CCG to take account of the evidence, and the threat this new policy poses for local patients and the continued provision of hearing aids across the UK. Hearing aids are the main treatment for hearing loss and it is of huge concern that audiologists will not be able to give them to all patients who need them. Implementation of the North Staffordshire rationing policy will also see existing patients, reliant on their hearing aids, denied access to repairs and batteries; the effect of this could be to prevent them using their aids. The strategic significance of hearing loss has been recently acknowledged by those setting health policy; a new 'Action Plan on Hearing Loss' to support services for deaf people and those with diminishing hearing has been produced by NHS England and the Department of Health (March 2015) – in short, these cuts are inconsistent with national policy."