

Re Jeff Goldberg, “Perhaps the reason...”, Canadian Audiologist, Vol. 2, Issue 3, May 2015.

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Alberto Behar, PEng

Dear Editor of *Canadian Audiologist*,

Jeff has examined the issue of NIHL, asking the question why, after so many years of instructing people about noise and its effects, people are still experiencing hearing loss. He points rightly to the fact that besides knowing the facts about noise, we now have not only a whole arsenal of sophisticated instruments to not only measure, but also assess the noise, but also an arsenal of sophisticated and not-so-sophisticated means to protect ourselves. The number and the variety of available hearing protectors is phenomenal. We know how to measure their attenuation (there are plenty of standards for that purpose), and how to select those appropriate for the particular environment and work requirement.

So, what’s wrong with our noise-exposed population that they are not doing what they are supposed (and they know) to do?

Well, let’s see what is the situation with other activities that are harmful, but are still part of our life? Let’s start with something “normal” such as smoking. Don’t we all know about lung cancer, to say the least? And still people not only smoke, but pay money to buy cigarettes. Drinking? This is another one. Not to talk about drinking and driving. Don’t people know that they shouldn’t be doing it? What about recreational drugs? Tons of literature about them, not to mention the millions of dollars spent in fighting drug dealers. And people still use them.

So, in my mind, NIHL is just one of the so many problems we are facing, where we cannot blame ignorance as a cause. Obviously, it is a very difficult issue to deal with. Education is not enough as is not the quality and quantity of hearing protectors the industry is supplying us with.

Did you expect me to give you the solution? Tough! I don’t have it. At one point, we thought that making the proper use of hearing protectors a condition of employment, but even that didn’t work. It helps, but does not solve the problem. Changing behaviour is one of the toughest tasks hearing conservation activists are facing. As the old saying goes, you can get the horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink it...