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Message from the Editor-in-Chief

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Welcome to the first issue of our twelfth year of CanadianAudiologist. I hope you had a relaxing and restful holiday season break with family gatherings, playing catch-up, and parties. Family gatherings and parties can be great, but also can be difficult, especially if they take place in a noisy location. And most places that are large enough to hold larger parties and family gatherings have notoriously poor acoustics.

Larger rooms have typically longer reverberation times by any measure of reverberation, and the SNR (or S/N ratio if you are over the age of 60) can be quite adverse. Large party rooms and noisy restaurants can be quite difficult for many hard of hearing people, and even those of us with typical hearing, but have some degree of SNR loss. Despite my “normal audiogram”, I do not function well in large echoey rooms.

While hearing aids and AI have worked together to improve things by stripping away some of the undesirable noise, this is less the case for highly reverberant listening locations. Accessories and Smartphone apps have come a long way but in many cases the distance is limited to 10-12 meters. With the use of inductive loop systems and telecoils which were widely available even in the 1970s, this certainly improved things but currently many hearing aids are not offered with a telecoil option. And I admit to being among the many clinicians who do not recommend telecoils as much as I should. In some cases, the hearing aids are larger than their equivalents without telecoils, and in a busy clinical setting, discussion of the benefits of an inductive pickup can frequently be skipped—something that I need to work on as part of my many new year’s resolutions.

Inductive transduction has its own set of strengths and challenges—while there is no digital delay with inductive transduction and loop systems are relatively easy (and inexpensive) to install, an inductive pickup (either in the hearing aid or by use of an inductive accessory) is required. Also, the orientation of an inductive pickup within the hearing aid may not be optimal—perhaps it is optimized for telephone use, but less than optimal for loop configurations?

Bluetooth has its own strengths and challenges and is not ideal for everyone and for every environment. Distance from the emitter can be an issue (as could be the presence of people walking between the emitter and the receiver), and Bluetooth, in conjunction with some hearing aid programming algorithms, can contribute to significant digital delay which may be problematic with music enjoyment and lip reading.

But Auracast is not here … at least not yet. The promise of Auracast is exciting, and some of the current challenges with Bluetooth will be addressed. In this issue of CanadianAudiologist we have a balanced and well-thought-out article called “Helping People Hear Anywhere with Telecoils and

Auracast” by Dr. Juliëtte Sterkens and Wynne Whyman. It is so important, that we ran it as the cover feature.

We also have a balanced and well-thought-out article by Dr. Kathy Pichora-Fuller that was initially written and published for the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, but we liked it so much that we requested permission to reprint it in this issue of CanadianAudiologist—“Hearing Health and Cognitive Health: Ten things that people who are Hard of Hearing should know”—definitely something that we can share with our hard of hearing clients.

Another reprint in this issue is from our sister organization, the American Academy of Audiology. We thank them for their flexibility in allowing us to run an excellent article called “Genetics, Hearing Loss, and the Audiologist by Doctors Sarah Crow and Angela Shoup.

And speaking of saying thank you, Erica Zaia is stepping down as one of the chair persons of our regular feature “Striking the Right Balance”. Erica has contributed significantly to my (and others’) education of vestibular issues and how that can best be handled in the clinical setting. She has also served many years on the CAA executive board. Erica is working at expanding vestibular services within the public system in Vancouver and I am told that she will keep us in the loop on the progress of this new and important endeavour.

I hope you enjoy this issue of CanadianAudiologist that we have put together for you. And it's not too soon to start planning for our next CAA annual conference to be held this October 15–18 in Collingwood, Ontario.