Canadian Audiologist

The Official Publication of the Canadian Academy of Audiology

OMG! I'M SWITCHING AUDIES

Published September 3rd, 2017

Gael Hannan



I recently met with a new audiologist for the first time.

She's not a *new* audiologist – she's been practicing for a while – but she was new to *me*, and as I traveled to my appointment, I realized that I was nervous because there was a lot riding on this visit.

"Breaking in" a new hearing health professional can be as stressful as switching hairdressers. You wonder, *what if she's not really that good, what if I can't properly explain what I need (want),*

what if this is just a job to her and she really doesn't care if I never come back.

Your expectations are high and rightfully so. You want to look good coming out of the salon – and you want really want to hear well, or at least *better*, at some point coming out of the clinic.

After a visit to a less-than-stellar hairdresser, you remind yourself, after you stop crying, that the buzz cut and crooked bangs will grow out in a week and you can try your luck elsewhere. But it's not so easy to jump from audie to audie. Unlike dropping a hairdresser at a bad clip of the scissors, I can't try out a hearing professional every few months – I don't buy new hearing aids that often. I usually switch providers only when one of us moves away. Or, as has happened twice in the last 10 years, when my audiologist selfishly decides to have a child and takes a full maternity leave. While I've never been to a truly inadequate audiologist, I have had to train a couple of mumblers who skipped the university lecture on the importance of client eye contact. Just as with certain people, you 'click' with certain professionals and communication is better. You respect their expertise and they respect your wisdom about *your* hearing loss or tinnitus.

But now I've moved across the country and while there are many talented audiologists in my area, I need someone who has a unique skill set; I have a cochlear implant (CI, for short) and both tinnitus and hyperacusis (hell, for short). And lucky for me, there's an audie who specializes in both issues, working in Vancouver which is just a ferry ride away. (When you live on an island, everything's a ferry ride away.)

This audie and I are at the beginning of our client-professional relationship, and it was a great start.

She knew her stuff.
She was patient.
She spent three hours with me.
She asked me questions.
She listened to my answers.
She spoke clearly, facing me.
She said, "Hmm, you're right. Your tinnicusis (my word) *is* complicated." (How different from the ENT who wasn't interested in my description of how even my cat jumping on the bed could cause a hyperacusis flare-up.)
She is referring me to other specialists; a physiotherapist trained in temporomandibular joint disorders and someone who teaches mindfulness meditation.
She made adjustments to my CI settings saying, *let's go back a few steps and work our way forward again.*
She said let's work on ways to decrease the stress that's making this worse.
She gave me hope that this *can* get better.

What more could one ask from a hearing professional? That evening, after a long day of travel and hearing testing, I sipped a glass of rosé and felt hopeful. Having options *and* a good hearing care professional is exactly what someone like me – with a hearing aid and a CI and tinnicusis – needs. Like I said, it was a great start.

This article was adapted with permission from HearingHealthMatters.org.