

He who has ears to hear, let him hear

ALL EARS



Newsletter 2012

Ears Inc.

...is an Australian, not-for-profit, non-denominational Christian association of audiologists, audiometrists and allied health care professionals dedicated to the training and equipping of health workers in developing countries, so that they can assist in the rehabilitation of the hearing impaired who would otherwise not have the capacity or opportunity to overcome their disability.

Ears Inc. provides ongoing training and support to local workers of health clinics, hospitals, deaf schools and mission groups in developing countries. Through this training, these volunteers are equipped with the necessary skills and resources to rehabilitate people with hearing loss and help them become self-sufficient and independent.

President's report

The last year has been a mixed bag of successes and challenges.

- We have seen some wonderful responses to the work of Peter and Rebecca Bartlett in Malawi. Pete and Bec seem to have contacted just about everyone in the country who have anything to do with the hearing impaired and are establishing themselves both in the health and education frameworks in the country. They have made significant developments in seeking funding for a new clinic building in Lilongwe to the point where this project can now proceed.
- In the Dominican Republic, Donna has just finished another two year training program and all the students have gained employment. We would like to congratulate the newest graduates on all their efforts and wish them all the best for their future careers in audiology. Congratulations to Alexis, Andry and Carmen, we wish you all the best. The program in the Dominican Republic has now graduated 15 new audiological technicians into the workforce.

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Want to support Ears?

If you would like help EARS help others, there are many ways you can get involved or support our work. Visit our website www.earsinc.org or turn to page 2 to find out more...



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- Both the Dominican and Malawi projects have proved their effectiveness and as such have attracted additional funding, particularly from the Hear the World Foundation.
- Carolyn Sigmont, Ian Skipworth and I were keen to return to El Minya, Egypt this year, but this has not been possible due to the political situation. We hope to visit Burma next year. A charity group is building a hospital in Myanmar and would like EARS Inc. to establish and train staff for an audiology clinic there.
- We are presenting two papers (one oral, one poster) on our work at the ASA conference in Adelaide in July 2012.

Thank you to everyone involved directly with EARS and all our supporters. We value you more than you know.

David Pither, President of EARS Inc.



Thanks Judy!

Many, many thanks to Judith Francis who has been faithfully serving EARS on the Board and as Secretary since 2005. She is moving to Abu Dhabi with her family this year and so has resigned from her position. Judy intends keeping in touch and helping out however she can from her new home.

We wish her all the best and God's richest blessing for this new chapter in her life.



How can you help EARS?

- **Become a member.** It's free! See our website for membership forms.
- **Volunteer.** If you are an audiologist or audiometrist who would like to provide training and/or hearing services overseas, contact us. Technicians also needed to check and calibrate equipment before it is sent overseas.
- **Marketing.** We need someone to assist with fundraising.
- **Donate funds** to support our work and overseas workers. \$20 a year will provide batteries and accessories for one hearing aid fitting; • \$35 will buy one reliable body level hearing aid. • \$200 will buy a behind-the-ear hearing aid. • \$600 will purchase ear mould making equipment. • \$2000 will purchase an audiometer. See our website for the many ways you can donate to Ears.
- **Donate old hearing aids.** Second hand BTE and body aids still in good working order can be refurbished and refitted overseas. 'Dead' hearing aids can also be useful for spare parts, including in-the-ear aids.
- **Second hand equipment** (audiometers, tympanometers, insertion gain analysers, ultrasonic cleaners, otoscopes, etc.) in good working order are also needed.

Contact us through our website www.earsinc.org or David Pither, President EARS Inc., audicare@mira.net or 03 9899 0260.



Malawi Update

Peter and Rebecca Bartlett have been at African Bible Colleges in Lilongwe Malawi for nearly two years, establishing a hearing clinic and a training program for hearing health workers.

Inaugural audiology course has commenced

The last week of May we were very busy wrapping up an introductory course we have been running with 18 African Bible College (ABC) students. We then reduced the numbers to 12 second year students. When they start the 3rd year of their 4 year degree in August, four or five of these students will attend an audiology technician training we'll run as a minor to their degree course.

In the middle of May we ran practical sessions every afternoon for them to practice hearing testing, otoscopy and middle ear testing on other students. We ran this in our house, fun but exhausting! The students are doing very well. They have been exploring and presenting their ideas on how to link the message of hearing loss prevention with a message of the gospel and they all came up with lots of different ideas. It was really amazing to see, I did not realize that there were so many ways to do this.

The Malawi students have also produced educational brochures in the local Malawi language Chichewa on ear health and hearing loss prevention.

The Malawi team ran a medical ear camp at Chinsapo secondary

college in the outer villages of Lilongwe with the team from the USA, a rather overwhelming experience. In one day we saw more than 250 people. Every second person had discharging ears. A clinical officer came with us armed with antibiotics, ear drops etc. so medical treatment could be supplied on the same day. We even saw three cholesteatomas!!!!!! (A particularly nasty ear infection, rarely seen by audiologists in western countries.)

Welcome visitors

At the time of writing this newsletter (early July) a team of seven audiologists and audiology students is visiting Malawi: five from USA, one from Ecuador and one from the UK. Dr. Ingrid McBride, Associate professor at from Arizona State University, heads the US team. The team traveled with Pete to different areas of Malawi to run hearing clinics at schools for the deaf and in hospitals. The ABC Malawi students traveled with them so were able to observe and be supervised by the international team. We have received funding for this purpose.

Global Hearing Health Conference

Peter and I attended a conference on Global Hearing Health in Pretoria South Africa late May 2012. Pete presented a

session on our work in Malawi and the various challenges of setting up services in a developing country. The conference was for people who are interested in hearing health in developing countries. We were very excited to meet several people who have supported the clinic. The conference was headed up by Jackie Clark, the chair of the humanitarian arm of the International Society of Audiology.

A few days after the conference, Pete also completed the Comrades run of 89km in Durban South Africa. He even got to see a few people from his running group from his hometown Ballarat, Victoria!

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Peter teaching a group of students

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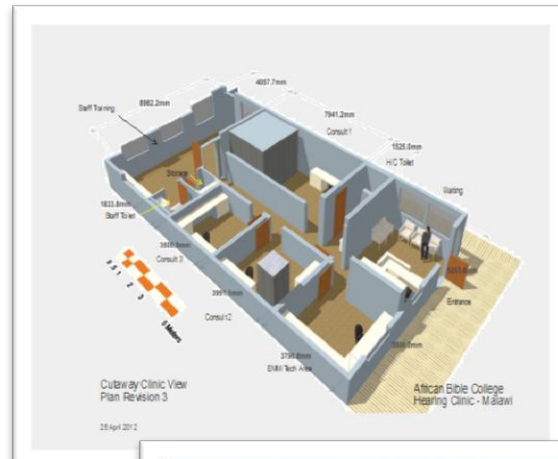
Assessments of at-risk infants now possible

We recently received funding from Hear the World Phonak for objective testing to test children from 1 day old who are at risk of hearing loss, like children whose mother had malaria in pregnancy or had meningitis or needed quinine treatment for malaria. This will really change the way we do things and has significant implications for early hearing aid fitting within the normal speech acquisition stages of childhood.

New clinic well on its way

We are very excited that construction has begun on a purpose-built hearing clinic funded by an Australian-African community grant scheme. It is expected to be completed by September/October this year. This will house the VRA unit and ASSR/ABR equipment which is being purchased with funds donated by Phonak’s Hear the World Foundation.

We plan to return to Australian from mid November to mid January for a much needed recuperation.



Peter & Bec Bartlett



As long-time members of EARS Incorporated and York Street Church of Christ, Pete and Bec are missionaries sent by their home mission organisation and home church, as well as missionaries received by African Bible Colleges in Lilongwe Malawi.

They believe they have been called by Jesus to faith and ministry in Malawi to fulfill his purposes. Their specific mission is to establish the first permanent, professional and comprehensive audiology service and training program in Lilongwe Malawi for the purpose of increasing accessibility of audiology services for all Malawians, through an expanding network of trainees.

The Bartletts anticipate staying in Malawi until at least mid 2014, and then either return to Australia or go on furlough to prepare for another 1-2 years.

Three changed lives because of EARS

Meet three clients commonly presenting for audiology services at the ABC clinic in Malawi.

Lisa

Hearing loss due to chronic ear infections from HIV/AIDS



Lisa was referred to the ABC Hearing Clinic by the social worker at Baylor Medical Clinic, a pediatric clinic for HIV patients. A delightful little girl, Lisa is in the care of her grandmother following the loss of her parents to HIV/AIDS. Lisa has had ongoing ear infections most of her life and no longer goes to school, as she has difficulty understanding anything the teacher says. She has not had discharge for at least a year. On testing, the audiogram showed a moderate conductive hearing loss bilaterally. Type B tympanograms were noted on both sides. She was referred to the one ENT in Malawi but treatment was not possible for her. She was fitted with two second hand hearing aids donated from Australia. The hard acrylic moulds were made on site in a couple of hours by a Malawian we trained to make earmoulds. The Baylor Medical Clinic assisted the family in purchasing the binaural hearing aid package (aid fitting fee, moulds, batteries and solar charger) at approximately \$25 with Lisa's grandmother contributing a small amount according to what she could afford.

If there is no other way for fittings to be funded, we ensure the package is affordable to the recipient's family.

Lisa was thrilled to be able to hear again, and she eagerly repeated numbers between one and ten even at softly spoken levels. She now looks forward to returning to school.

Clara

Drug-induced hearing loss

Clara attended with her aunty who is now her guardian after her mother died in 2002. Her father had already passed away.



She has very good clear speech. Clara had worn a hearing aid in her left ear which she obtained from a visiting team of audiologists though she lost it in 2010. Clara is having difficulty understanding the teacher in the classroom even though she sits near the front. Although she is 17 years old, Clara is only in grade 6 at school.

Clara was treated with quinine to combat a very bad episode of malaria when she was a young girl and has had difficulties hearing since that time. Her hearing has deteriorated in recent years. She was diagnosed with HIV in the last two years.

Clara tested reliably and the audiogram showed a severe to profound mixed loss with Type A tympanograms. Impressions were taken for two hearing aids. The moulds were made and the fitting performed within two weeks of her test appointment

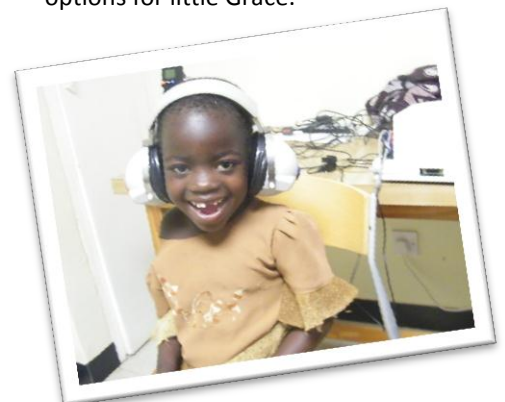
Grace

Permanent loss since birth

Grace is another beautiful little six year old girl. She presented with a history suggesting deafness since birth. Grace had no speech, Type A tympanograms, refer OAEs and no reflexes. Behavioural Observation Audiometry testing showed no responses also. She conditioned a little to vibration but not reliably.

She was reviewed when Prof. Jackie Clark from the University of Dallas, U.S.A. visited in July 2011. Play audiometry showed a corner audiogram. A hearing aid was not suitable for her.

There are five residential Schools for the Deaf spread throughout Malawi. We carefully explained to her family, through a translator, the schooling options for little Grace.



DR Update

In 2002, Donna Carkeet visited the Dominican Republic, Cambodia, India and the Philippines during a year of volunteering with Ears Inc. When she returned to the Dominican Republic at the end of that year, the idea was born of developing an audiology training program. Donna moved to the Dominican Republic in 2005, by which time the project needed a full-time audiologist in order to build a larger training program and expand the current audiology clinic. She has been living in the Dominican Republic since then, learnt to speak Spanish and has developed a very successful two year Audiology Training Program.



It has been another busy year. In April I attended American Academy of Audiology conference in Boston where I joined a committee that is looking at audiology education around the world. I also participated in the Unitron Latin American training in Cancun. This was a great chance to collect information about how audiology training happens (or doesn't happen) in different countries in Latin America as well as learn about the company's new product range.

In May we welcomed two students from two universities in the US who wanted a taste of humanitarian audiology as a part of their clinical practical experience. With their help we were able to get a lot of projects done. We are hoping to open up some vestibular services and we were able to take a good look at the equipment we have and what is realistic.

We also tested hearing aids and conducted otoscopy and tympanometry for all the children in a school for the hearing



impaired. All of these children have been fitted with donated aids. We were able to train the teachers further on care and troubleshooting.

We visited a government daycare centre to test all the children's hearing. As a result the centre is now requiring a hearing test as part of their registration requirements.

The evoked potential services have really taken off we are doing around 10 ABR's a week. We are also receiving a lot of premature babies for OAEs. This has improved early diagnosis and fitting of children.

This month my colleague Miguel and I will attend training in North Carolina in the university clinic to improve our evoked potential skills. There's never an end to the learning!! At the same time Miguel will be seeing how a clinic in the USA works and how that compares. This will also be a good chance for us to have a good talk about the future plans for the DR.

In May three students graduated and they were all quickly snatched up by clinics.

We are gradually changing the way audiology is done in this country. Now the ENTs want trained people to conduct audiometry assessments and they are sending for more patients for pre-surgery testing. They are also sending children earlier, which is an excellent development.

Meet Maria

Maria is 10 years old. She came to see us in 2008 with severe to profound hearing loss after mumps. She was referred to us by another clinic as her family had no money for hearing aids. Maria had been in grade 1 when she became ill but could no longer attend school because of her deafness. We fitted her with two donated second-hand hearing aids.

We referred her for cochlear implant evaluation but the family could not demonstrate the required level of commitment to device use for the surgery to go ahead. They didn't think the hearing aids improved their daughter's hearing as much as they should and so their care and use of the aids was erratic.

The parents tried to get MJ into a signing school for the deaf, but her language was too good to be accepted. The local school won't take her as she has a hearing loss. She is now 10 years old and still not back at school.

All of this could have been avoided with an injection which is provided by the government free of charge to infants. Sadly many in the community think mumps and measles are part of childhood so don't have their children vaccinated, not understanding the possible consequences of these childhood illnesses.