



**4-10 May 2015**

In keeping with the week's theme 'Connect and Communicate', we provide an update on our research into understanding deafness and how to better support people who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families. We also highlight hearing-related charities in the region.

## Work with us to prioritise future research into mild to moderate hearing loss

The only people who really understand a condition are those who deal with it, day in, day out. Hearing loss affects one in six people in the UK, the majority (92%) of whom have mild to moderate hearing loss.

This is a long term condition that affects communication and can impact upon individuals' quality of life.



We are offering people affected by mild-moderate hearing loss the opportunity to take part in a national Priority Setting Partnership to help shape the future of research. Supported by the James Lind Alliance, we are co-ordinating the partnership alongside the national UK charity Hearing Link. If you, a friend or member of your family is affected by hearing loss, or you are a hearing professional or clinician, we would like your views.

Helen Henshaw, Senior Research Fellow and project co-ordinator, said: "Hearing loss research topics have typically been decided upon by researchers in universities. This Priority Setting Partnership is important in redressing the balance of power and enabling those who really understand the issues to have their say." Jean Straus, a partnership patient representative, said: "My role is crucial here. Research scientists might be following a lead from one topic to another, but, hey, I've got the problem, and I know that's not the right way of looking at it!"

An initial survey (Round 1; November 2014-January 2015) gathered over 1000 'unanswered questions' about the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of mild to moderate hearing loss. A second survey (Round 2) will be launched to coincide with Deaf Awareness Week

(4-10th May 2015). This survey offers people with hearing loss, their friends, family and clinicians, the opportunity to rank the questions generated in Round 1 in terms of which are the most important to be answered by research. A final priority setting workshop will be held in Birmingham in September 2015, where the 'Top 10' questions for research will be agreed. The Partnership will ensure that the outputs of this process are brought to the attention of research funders, research commissioners and policy makers. So, if you want your say about the issues that are important to you, drop us a line (details below) we'd love to have your views.

### Find out more:

Contact Dr Helen Henshaw,  
helen.henshaw@nottingham.ac.uk  
Tel: 0115 823 2606.  
[www.hearinglink.org/james-lind-alliance-priority-setting-partnership](http://www.hearinglink.org/james-lind-alliance-priority-setting-partnership)  
Access Survey Round 2 (opens 4th May 2015): <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/jla-hearing2>

### Register your interest in attending the final prioritisation workshop:

JLAhearing@nottingham.ac.uk  
Join us on Facebook: search for "JLA Priority Setting Partnership for mild to moderate hearing loss"  
Follow us on Twitter: @JLAhearing

## The impact of hearing loss on everyday life: new study needs your help

Last year, PhD student Eithne Heffernan carried out a study that aimed to understand the impact of mild-to-moderate hearing loss on individuals' everyday lives.

Eithne consulted 25 people who have hearing loss and 9 professionals (audiologists, hearing therapists and expert researchers). She found that people with hearing loss can often feel 'left out' at social gatherings; For example, one man said: "if you go to weddings or christenings or that sort of thing, all these people around you are having a good time and you are isolated because you are not fully part of the group".

This can lead to avoidance of social gatherings and other social interactions. A hearing therapist said: "People self-isolate quite a lot. As situations become harder and harder to manage, the much easier option is to not do it".

Eithne has used the findings from her study to design a new questionnaire that will measure the impact of hearing loss on everyday life. The questionnaire will be used to assess whether or not interventions such as hearing aids make a real difference to everyday lives of people with hearing loss. If you have a hearing loss, we are now inviting you to take part in a new study to help refine this questionnaire. You can also help by completing the questionnaire by post or email. Please get in touch with Eithne.

Email: [msxeh1@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:msxeh1@nottingham.ac.uk)  
Tel: 0115 823 2631



Eithne Heffernan

## Habilitation for Hearing Loss Research Team win prestigious Editors' award

One of the top international research journals on hearing science recently recognised the work from a team of BRU researchers who published a research article in 2014 on the benefits of auditory training in adults aged 50-74 years who had mild hearing loss.

The Ear and Hearing Editors' Award is given annually for the best article in the journal for its outstanding contribution to the literature on hearing and balance. The authors Mel Ferguson, Helen Henshaw, Dan Clark and Dave Moore were delighted to receive this award, which was picked up at the American Auditory Society annual conference in the sunny climes of Arizona, USA. They

are only the second UK team to win this award since 1995.

If you are interested in finding out more about this article, go to <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4072445/> or contact melanie.ferguson@nottingham.ac.uk



Helen Henshaw, Mel Ferguson and Dave Moore receiving the Ear and Hearing Editors Award at the 42nd American Auditory Society Conference in Arizona.



## Getting used to hearing aids

**The most common intervention for adults with a hearing loss is hearing aids. Gradually, listening with hearing aids becomes easier, a process known as acclimatisation.**

Audiologists will often tell their patients that the process of "getting used to their hearing aids" will take time. However, researchers don't yet fully understand this process.

Venessa Vas is a first year PhD student. Her first study will explore the factors that contribute to acclimatisation in first time hearing aid users, specifically of the role of cognition (e.g. attention and memory), which we know is important for listening.

First time hearing aid users will be recruited from Nottingham Audiology Services.

Shortly after receiving their hearing aids, they will be requested to undertake a series of listening and thinking games that target cognitive abilities, over 6 months. A better understanding of the processes that underlie acclimatisation will ultimately help first-time hearing aid users and audiologists.

Acclimatisation is explained further as part of a multimedia educational programme that we have developed (C2Hear). For more information see our website <http://www.hearing.nihr.ac.uk/research/c2hear>



Venessa Vas



Jenny Sealey MBE, patron of the Nottinghamshire Deaf Society

## 125 years and going strong

The Nottinghamshire Deaf Society is proud to welcome Jenny Sealey MBE as its patron.

Jenny will support and raise the profile of the charity's incredible 125th anniversary celebrations.

Hailing from Nottingham, Jenny is an iconic figure in the arts and disability sectors, who has been deaf since the age of seven. Jenny has been artistic director and CEO at Graeae Theatre Company – an award-winning disability-led theatre company - since 1997. She was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Honours in 2009. Jenny said: "I am so excited to be a patron of the Nottinghamshire Deaf Society, as I believe the work the charity does is invaluable."

The Society is a registered charity based in Forest Road West and was formed in 1890 by a group of church and community leaders to help deaf people in the local area. It has launched its 1-2-5 fundraising campaign for 2015 aiming to raise £125,000 this year.

Irene Andrews, Chief Executive said: "We are so humbled that Jenny has joined us as a patron, she is an iconic figure in the deaf and theatrical world – and we are thoroughly excited to continue celebrating our 125th anniversary with her support."

For more information go to [www.nottsdeaf.org.uk](http://www.nottsdeaf.org.uk) or contact Irene Andrews on 0115 988 7574 or [irene.andrews@nottsdeaf.org.uk](mailto:irene.andrews@nottsdeaf.org.uk)

## An introduction to single-sided deafness

Single-sided deafness means having a substantial hearing loss in one ear and little or no hearing loss in the other ear. Its onset is often sudden and unexplained, although it can be due to a head injury, tumour, or viral infection. Approximately 7,500 people are affected in the UK each year.

Although individuals have one 'good' ear, they still report difficulties with listening in many everyday situations. These difficulties include problems identifying where sounds are coming from, being aware of sounds on the

side of their deaf ear, and following a conversation in noisy surroundings. Many people with single-sided deafness also experience difficulties socialising and report feeling isolated and frustrated. They also find it a challenge to interact with strangers, who are unaware of the social and emotional impact of their condition.

If you are interested in our research on single-sided deafness, please contact: [Laura.lucas@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:Laura.lucas@nottingham.ac.uk)



Laura Lucas

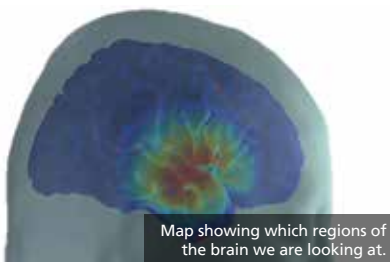
## Shining a new light on cochlear implants



Functional near-infrared spectroscopy testing equipment.

Cochlear implants are an option for some people with severe-to-profound deafness. These send electrical signals to the hearing nerve that are interpreted by the brain as sound.

However, some people get more benefit from their cochlear implant than others. If the brain cannot interpret the signals, then the sense of hearing will be limited.



Map showing which regions of the brain we are looking at.

PhD student Carly Lawler is part of a team of researchers who are trying to understand why this is. Carly uses functional near-infrared spectroscopy to measure brain responses in cochlear implant users. This state-of-the-art method works by safely shining light into the brain.



Participant with a cochlear implant taking part in the study.

So far, Carly has confirmed that the method is safe and effective in measuring brain responses to sound in cochlear implant users. This study, due to complete in July 2015, will inform on the potential for using the method for assessing cochlear implant users throughout the clinical process.

## Cochlear Implant User Survey

Do you wear a cochlear implant in one ear?

With or without a hearing aid? We want your views. Please take part in our short online survey to help us explore the benefits, or not, of having an implant in one ear and a hearing aid in the other. Go to: <http://bit.ly/ciusersurvey> For a survey by post, contact Dr Claire Fielden. Email: [claire.fielden@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:claire.fielden@nottingham.ac.uk) Tel: 0115 823 2603.



Dr Claire Fielden



The Ear Foundation, having brought cochlear implants for children to the UK in 1989, now provides services for deaf children and adults through four main programs; family, education, clinical and research.

These serve to bridge the gap between the clinics where these exciting technologies are fitted and the local community where they are used in everyday life.

Sound Space is The Ear Foundation's purpose-built facility that meets the

needs of all users under one roof and has:

- Two sound-treated rehabilitation rooms for adults & children therapy/clinical services.
- A 'Hearing Technology Suite' with all the latest assisted listening devices for people to try
- A 'Family Group therapy room' custom built for deaf children, families and adult groups to build their communication skills in a family friendly environment.
- A quiet meeting room and a research room

Tel: +44 (0)1159 421985

Email: [info@earfoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@earfoundation.org.uk)

Web: [www.earfoundation.org.uk](http://www.earfoundation.org.uk)



## Stay in touch/ Get involved

Are you interested in helping us develop our research?

Around 900 people now on our database have expressed an interest in taking part in our hearing research. We match eligible people and their interests to relevant, ethically approved studies. All participation is voluntary, and all participants are given time and the information they need to decide whether a particular study is for them. If you would like to:

- volunteer for our projects
- receive the newsletter regularly and express your views
- volunteer to join our research review panel

We would be delighted to hear from you. Contact Sandra on [sandra.smith@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:sandra.smith@nottingham.ac.uk) for more information. If you are on our database, please let us know if you have experienced any recent changes to your hearing, so we can continue to match you with the most relevant studies.



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<http://twitter.com/hearingnihr>

NIHR Nottingham Hearing Biomedical Research Unit  
Ropewalk House  
113 The Ropewalk  
Nottingham NG1 5DU

Tel: 0115 823 2600  
Textphone: 0115 823 2615  
SMS: 07860 025 916  
Calls welcome via Text Relay service  
Email: [nhbru-enquiries@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:nhbru-enquiries@nottingham.ac.uk)  
[www.hearing.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.hearing.nihr.ac.uk)

## Access to Understanding Science Competition

Access to Understanding promotes clear communication of biomedical research findings to the public. The initiative's international competition challenges early-career scientists to write a concise, balanced summary of one of a range of pre-selected research articles.

PhD student, Carly Lawler, entered this year's competition, with her summary of an article on a potential drug treatment for tinnitus. This article had been selected by the charity Action on Hearing Loss. Carly's entry was judged as the best summary for this research article, and was

short-listed in the top 12 out of over 300 entries. Carly attended the prestigious awards ceremony at The British Library in London on 27th March 2015 where she received a highly commended certificate.

The evening celebrated the achievements of the entrants to highlight the importance of communicating scientific information in a way that can be understood by everyone.



Shortlisted candidates for the Access to Understanding competition (Carly Lawler 5th from left), with Chair of the judging panel, Simon Denegri (far right).

The programme was developed in collaboration with members of the public and research organisations across the region, with financial support from the East Midlands Academic Health Science Network. Thirty people attended the free training and feedback has been extremely positive. We hope to make our training more widely available in the coming months.

**Dr Adele Horobin,**  
Patient and Public  
Involvement and  
Engagement Manager



Trainees attending our programme in Leicester.

## Supporting members of the public in reviewing research

Members of the public have a lot to contribute to research. Not just as participants but also by partnering with researchers to improve research.

Their unique, personal experience of healthcare and/or a health condition (who better than someone with tinnitus to describe what tinnitus is like?) brings a valuable, fresh perspective to the research team.

We have led in developing a training programme, across the East Midlands, for members of the public. This is to help support them in reviewing grant applications, study plans and recruitment information for participants.