



# EHDI E-MAIL EXPRESS

The monthly newsletter of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program



This is an e-mail communication from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) "Improving the Effectiveness of Newborn Hearing Screening, Diagnosis and Intervention through the Medical Home" project funded through cooperative agreements with the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD). It is designed to provide AAP Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Chapter Champions with resources and current clinical and other information. The EHDI E-Mail Express is sent on a monthly basis. Please feel free to share the EHDI E-Mail Express with colleagues working on or interested in childhood hearing detection and intervention issues. Distribution information appears on the last page.

## AUGUST 2012

## FROM YOUR CHAIR

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- EHDI Survey for Physicians
- Social Networking Helps Parents with Difficult Diagnosis
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**An admission:** There is no childhood hearing loss in my family, or even in my family tree, as far as I know. (If you are asking, then, just how did I get involved with the idea of universal newborn hearing screening, well that's another topic for another day. Stay tuned.) There is, however, some hearing loss with onset in later life in my family tree. That's not so unusual, of course. I suspect it is the rule rather than the exception, as modern medicine finds so many ways to keep us alive longer.

My father, for example, now has a moderate high frequency hearing loss. He tried using hearing aids for a period of time, and finally decided that, at least for now, he likes his life without hearing aids better than his life with hearing aids. I'm OK with that, he's a grown up. He can make choices.

When I visit dear old dad, though, I realize (more than he will ever realize) that he is missing information. Every minute of every day, there is some auditory information that he isn't receiving, but that those around him can register easily. He hears my male voice and other male voices pretty much just fine. Female voices, not so much. And so he appears to be inattentive, or distracted, or perhaps rude, when he reconnects intermittently with the conversation involving wife, or daughter, or granddaughter, or great-granddaughter. Family members understand, of course, and family members are forgiving, for the most part. As for forgiveness from the waitress at the local diner or the woman behind the counter at the post office, not so much. Not knowing that he has high frequency hearing loss, those women just get a little mad at him.

Dad misses information, but it is not a tragedy. It is just his own little inadvertent slide into the world of becoming somewhat of a recluse. A quiet escape. Nothing much is lost if he misses the distant sound of an approaching siren, (except perhaps when he is driving his own vehicle down the road). If he misses the sound of hummingbird wings whirring to and from the feeder outside his window, or the songs of finches chirping on the fence rail, no big deal. And if the high notes of the classical guitar solo escape his hearing during the concert in the park, he still enjoys all the mellow tones that come out of the middle and lower registers of the instrument. He is getting by, even while missing information.

Of course, wind the clock back some eighty years when he was a student entering grade school, and missing information every hour of every day would be a really bad idea. "Slow to learn, slow to read, slow to comprehend, not listening to directions, not cooperating with instructions, easily distracted..." I can just imagine the shocking report card he might have brought home if he were hard of hearing as a kindergartener.

Even more important than the school-aged child, a newborn baby enrolls in "school" on the first day of life. Hearing the mother's voice cooing and whispering in the delivery room at the hospital (and, in fact, hearing that same voice for months prior to birth while captive inside the womb). Hearing the father's verbal celebrations. Hearing the bedtime story being read to the older sibling, or the praises of the many aunts and uncles, or the doctor's ramblings at the first check-up in the office.

Or, for the deaf baby born to signing parents, seeing (rather than hearing) the signed language, and the signed cooing in the delivery room, and the father's signed celebrations, and the signed singing, and the signed bedtime story... It's all school. Every waking hour of every day, it's school. And for a tiny baby newly enrolled in life's "school," missing information is not a choice, it is a tragedy.

We're in the business of making sure that newborn babies aren't faced with a life of time spent missing information. Thanks for being part of the effort. It's good work.

- Albert Mehl, MD

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Event	Date	Location	Details
2013 Annual EHDI Meeting	April 14—16, 2013	Glendale, AZ	<a href="#">Web site</a>