

Press release

Phonak successfully hosts Hearing Care for Adults 2009 conference

Leading experts in aging and audiology provide insights to clinicians in Chicago

Chicago, USA / Stäfa, Switzerland (November 25th 2009) – From November 16-18, Phonak, the leading manufacturer of innovative hearing solutions, presented the second edition of the Hearing Care for Adults Conference, focusing on the special needs of the older population. The conference brought together leading experts in aging and audiology from around the world and more than 250 clinicians who work everyday with older people with hearing loss for an opportunity to share experiences and discuss the latest research and trends in hearing care for older people.

We are currently witnessing an unprecedented population aging. While 20% of the global population was more than 60 years old in 2000, 28% will be over 60 in 2020. The changing demographic trend means that the number of patients seeking treatment from hearing care professionals is also significantly increasing. This presents a number of challenges making it essential that clinicians have the knowledge and skills to help their older clients most effectively.

In two and a half days of interactive conference sessions in Chicago, numerous presentations, a clinician's forum, a poster session and podium discussions addressed all aspects of hearing care for the elderly. The speaker panel included leading experts from around the globe. They presented the latest research results and clinical insights on topics such as communication and aging, amplification for older adults, the impact of hearing on dementia, effects of aging on speech perception and the special needs of the elderly.

"We are very satisfied with the outcome and the feedback from this year's conference," stated Louise Hickson, Conference Chair and Co-Director of the University of Queensland, Australia. "The high attendance level and the interactive course confirm the high relevance of the topic of hearing care for the elderly. We have seen a vivid exchange among professionals from different disciplines and continents, beginning with the sessions and continuing throughout the social program."

Key sessions of the conference centered around the questions of screening adults for hearing loss, whether the current audiological approaches meet the needs of older people, how services and products might be adapted to ideally fit the needs of the elderly and what role early intervention and prevention play.

During his presentation, Dr. Robert W. Sweetow from the University of California focused on the idea that communication not only encompasses hearing, but also listening skills, cognitive-based interpretation and communication strategies, and as such, that hearing aids should be provided in the context of an integrated rehabilitation plan that takes the entire communication spectrum into account.

Andi Vonlanthen, Vice President, Group Product Development and Dr. Stefan Launer, Vice President Advanced Concepts and Technologies, from Phonak AG, Switzerland, spoke of the importance of user ergonomics, signal processing and wireless connectivity in hearing solutions to meet the specific needs of the senior population.

"A major challenge for older users is the ability to interact with the hearing systems," Andi Vonlanthen said about the challenges of providing high-tech solutions for the older generations. "The user interfaces need to be designed in such a way that they are intuitive and manually easy to use for any hearing aid user, and especially elderly people."

The participant feedback was inline with the host and the speakers' assessment. The excellent speaker line-up and the comprehensive content were highly appreciated. The dexterity and cognition issues were considered as most relevant, and a major take-away for the participants was the need to take a holistic approach when working with elderly clientele. The participants were unanimous in their statements that the elderly already represent a growing proportion of patients and that this trend can be expected to continue.

Dr. Patricia B. Kricos, Professor of Audiology and Director of the Center for Gerontological Studies at the University of Florida and President-elect of the American Academy of Audiology, shared her impression from the Chicago event: "This conference was excellent. It is wonderful to have so many experts in areas of audiology aging at one meeting. I learned so much and also had confirmation of current practice and inspiration for future practice."

The full proceedings from the conference will be available soon for download under www.phonak.com/proceedings_chicago

About Phonak

Headquartered near Zurich, Switzerland, Phonak, a member of the Sonova Group, has developed, produced and globally distributed state-of-the-art hearing systems and wireless devices for more than 50 years. The combination of expertise in hearing technology, mastery in acoustics and strong cooperation with hearing care professionals allows Phonak to significantly improve people's hearing ability and speech understanding and therefore their quality of life.

Phonak offers a complete range of digital hearing instruments, along with complementary wireless communication systems. With a worldwide presence, Phonak drives innovation and sets new industry benchmarks regarding miniaturization and performance.

For more information, please visit www.phonak.com or contact:

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