



Sound Check

CLINICAL BULLETIN #8



Everyone Hear in Your Community: A How-to Guide to Leveraging Auracast™ in Your Practice

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Auracast™ and loops help clients hear better than they ever have and will change the way you practice, while creating priceless goodwill for the profession. Here is a list of things you can do to ensure your clients are fully experiencing all the potential benefits of Auracast™ with their hearing aids.

- Install an Auracast™ and counter loop with a quality directional mic in the waiting room. Routinely offer hands-on demonstrations to clients and family members on connecting to both technologies and always provide information in writing. 
- It's *not* enough to just tell your patients about Auracast™ and telecoils. Demo again at follow-up appointments.
- Maintain a list of Auracast™, FM, and hearing loops in your community and keep a list of which patients belong to which places of worship. You'll need a signed release to share your clients' names with other congregants and clergy.
- Google Maps now lists Assistive Hearing Loops and Auracast™ under accessibility. Be sure to list *your* office. Scan the code to learn more. 
- Give workshops on “Get the Most from Your Hearing Aids using Auracast™ and Telecoils” in your community.
- Routinely inform patients about their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and ADA-Access-Ready hearing aids. Find many free to use educational handouts on centerforhearingaccess.org/audiologists.
- Write a letter to the local newspaper or senior centers about the new “Hearing Assistance for Hearing Aids” in the community, listing your name and email as a professional willing to help consumers.
- Support an Auracast™ system in your personal place of Worship. I am happy to help with PR and a bulletin insert.

- Use the assistive listening system offered when visiting theaters or other venues. Listen carefully. Does it sound good? Are neckloops available no matter which system is offered? As a professional you want to know what is offered for your clients in your area. Get involved to improve or replace poorly functioning systems.

Beyond Properly Fitted Hearing Aids

If a client is a successful user of a smartphone, wireless TV device and/or remote mic, it's an opportunity explain how assistive technology works in public venues — something mandated by ADA law. An Auracast™ or loop demonstration in the office is fun and takes 2-3 minutes. Offer an Auracast™ (or loop) listener to the accompanying family member – so they can hear it too. Afterward, encourage clients to try a system somewhere in the community using your list of Auracast, FM, or looped venues. If there are none, explain why you want to change this. In 2008, there were no loops in my area; today, there are over a hundred loops in the Fox Valley and some 1000 in Wisconsin alone. Many of my patients took this information to places where they wanted to hear better.

After a positive experience—be it in a waiting room or place of worship, I ask clients if they'd be willing to do one thing to move this technology forward. Requests were usually answered with “It depends” or “Sure.” I would then hand over a letter (see an example of this letter on the next page) and the list of venues in the area (gradually expanded to include Auracast™). Explain that you hope to advance these systems in the community *to help all hearing aid wearers hear great*. Compare Auracast™ and loops to curb cuts for wheelchairs. Describe how *one person* took information to a minister or library with a request to make the facility more hearing-friendly/accessible. “If you hand this letter to a person in charge, *you* may be that person who makes more Auracast™ systems happen in our community.” Many clients even helped with funding. Cost is often not an issue. Lack of knowledge *is*.



Sample Letter

[Hearing Center name] [Website] [Telephone Number]

An open letter to those considering the installation of Assistive Listening:

As an Audiologist in [Local City] for over [X] years, I have helped thousands of people with hearing loss understand and cope with the challenges they face on a daily basis. My patients complain that hearing in large areas such as meeting halls and auditoriums is hard.

Hearing loss affects two out of every ten people. It is a common misunderstanding that hearing loss is only about loss of loudness. It is more about clarity and getting a good signal to the impaired ear. For people with hearing loss, it is about separating the sounds they want to hear from those they don't want to hear. People with hearing loss will tell you that they can hear your voice but cannot understand. So, the loudness is at the proper level, but the clarity of the speech signal is lacking. Distance from the sound source, reverberation, and ambient noise in a room can make it more difficult to distinguish the speech signal. This is where assistive listening systems such as Auracast™ can be of great help.

The new Auracast™ systems, and the older, and still very helpful, hearing loops are becoming more popular and are found wherever people go to listen. These systems send the audio signal from the facility's microphone and sound system direct to hearing aids or cochlear implants. An added benefit is that the Auracast™ system will benefit not only users of newer instruments, but also those with devices that still use telecoils, and also help people without hearing aids, who simply would like a boost in hearing in public settings. This improved audio signal to the ear provides speech clarity that amplification alone simply cannot provide.

I recommend assistive listening systems, not only because they are affordable and the law mandates them, but once installed, they are economical to maintain. My patients love the fact that they can go into a theater, church, or auditorium push a button on their hearing aid or smartphone and hear the sound directly. Just as hearing someone's voice on the phone brings distant speech right to your ear, these systems provide that same close-range connection to distant speech in large areas. Learn more about the different assistive listening systems on www.CenterForHearingAccess.org.

These systems give people with hearing loss access to clear, noise-free sound, and the freedom to be like everyone else who takes a seat and then relaxes to hear and listen to the program or worship service.

ABC Hearing Center does not install assistive listening systems or solicit business but acts as an educator and advocate for their hard-of-hearing patients. Email us if you have any questions.

Thank you for your interest and enthusiasm for ensuring everyone hears great in our community.

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For any assistive listening related questions, Juliette Sterkens, Au.D. can be contacted at juliette.sterkens@outlook.com ■