

GRAND RIVER

HEARING CENTRE

LISTENING TO HELP YOU HEAR



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Renee Schafer and Calvin Staples

Listening is a two-way street at Grand River Hearing Centre, says audiologist Calvin Staples. "Our motto, 'We Listen to Help You Hear' best explains the approach we take with our clients." Staples adds: "there's so much more to helping people hear better than just doing hearing tests and fitting them with hearing aids. We do that."

Grand River Hearing Centre, located in Kitchener's Conrad Medical Building, at 16 Andrew Street has been open and serving the public since November 2011. Audiologist Staples is joined by Hearing Instrument Specialist Renee Schafer.

The Centre offers a full range of audiological services including: hearing assessments; tinnitus management; hearing aids and hearing protection, including monitors and earplugs; as well as personalized ear-therapy programs.

Their approach to ear health is a holistic one, and if appropriate they will work with other medical professionals to achieve optimum hearing results for clients.

A Comprehensive Assessment

Hearing assessment is usually the first step in dealing with hearing loss. "Grand River Hearing Centre uses a comprehensive approach to ear testing. In addition to the standard diagnostic assessment, Staples and Schafer test in various simulated environments that mimic real life settings.

"Sitting in a sound proof room is an artificial

setting," says Staples. "We also test hearing with various background noises such as speech and competing voice environments and also assess word memory and noise tolerance levels." Rehabilitation comes next and often involves selection and fitting of a hearing aid. No two clients are alike and both Staples and Schafer tailor this to individual needs. Our services are completely personalized to each person," says Staples.

- Grand River Hearing Centre uses research and evidence to make clinical decisions for each and every patient.
- "We perform verification

that the hearing aid volume is correct for the patient and we design treatment programs for the patient and communicate with other professions to achieve this."

Adding that, "hearing loss is extremely correlated with cognitive impairments such as memory loss with aging. Our goal is to help people in a meaningful way."

The all-important Ear-Therapy programs come next. Staples equates this to physical training. Just as physiotherapy can assist in the rehabilitation of muscles and joints, after a physical accident or illness, Ear-Therapy programs can train individuals with hearing loss to rebuild their skills.

"Hearing aids are the building blocks to improve hearing but learning to listen better is essential too," Staples states. He finds that many people, hearing-impaired or not have become "lazy listeners".

"And lazy listening contributes to impaired communication skills," he says.

The staff at Grand River Hearing Centre utilizes the Listening and Communication Enhancement (LACE) program to meet the patient's communication needs.

Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a growing hearing issue, says Staples. Characterized as a high-pitched ring, buzz or hum in one or both ears, the condition has no cure. "But it can be successfully managed," assures Staples. Up to 10% of the population will experience periodic

Tinnitus, usually only temporary. But for between 2-3%, the condition is constant—and debilitating. Education and supportive counseling are the keys to successful Tinnitus management. Staples, who is skilled in Tinnitus Retraining Therapy, again uses a holistic approach to managing the constant ear buzz. He tailors each remediation technique to the individual client's personality, condition and preference.

As Tinnitus seems to worsen with stress, relaxation techniques may be appropriate. While Grand River Hearing Centre's Audiologist currently works with pharmacists he is in the process of generating relationships with companies that provide deep meditation and yoga to the community and hopes to incorporate a relationship with Cognitive Behavioral Therapists as well. A key component to tinnitus management is the use of sound therapy. The use of Sound Generators along with the aforementioned support tools will facilitate the tinnitus management process. Staples indicates that research has indicated that masking the tinnitus is only marginally effective, our goal here is to use sound therapy as a tool to help change the reaction to the tinnitus.

Music and Hearing Loss

Of concern to the Grand River Hearing Centre is the hearing damage in teenagers and young adults as a result of high-volume MP3 players or iPods. Staples who is an instructor in the Hearing Instrument Specialist program at Conestoga College has observed that most students travelling to and from class are "plugged into" music. Volumes are turned loud enough to cause permanent hearing damage.

"If you have the volume cranked to maximum setting, that is 100 decibels, then 15 minutes can damage your hearing," says Staples. In random testing done at Conestoga in 2011, Staples found that of every five students wearing iPods, three were in the hearing danger zone.

The attitude of young people towards potential hearing loss was as alarming as the findings. "Most of them said they didn't care; that listening to loud music is their personal choice," reports Staples. Noting that the study and treatment of hearing loss is ever-evolving, the professionals at Grand River Hearing Centre are diligent in keeping abreast of the latest findings and treatments. Yet one common factor remains the same, over time. "Ignoring hearing loss is the worst thing people can do. The sooner treatment's begun, the better are the chances of success."

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