

HEARING AIDS

A Report to the Community

Agenda

- Hearing Aid SIG activities
- Do you really need a hearing aid?
- Hearing Test – what to look out for
- Reading your diagnosis
- The hearing aid marketplace
- Shopping for a provider – not a hearing aid
- Hearing Aid Provider business practices

Disclaimer



- I am not a hearing professional
- I do not work for a hearing aid manufacturer
- I don't own stock in a hearing aid firm

The Hearing Aid SIG



- Members experiences
- Internet Searching
- Speakers

SIG Speakers

- Margaret Hutchison – Austin Hearing
- Suzette Fields – Legacy Hills Hearing Center
- Janet Krueger – Represents Starkey – a manufacturer
- Kelly Kelly – Hearing Research Institute
- Dr. Amanda Zappler – Clinical Supervisor and Professor of Speech and Hearing University of Texas Austin
- Joyce Parsons – Executive Director of Texas Board of Professional Licensing – Hearing
- Nancy Innes – Audiologist for Costco – Austin

Signs that you may need a hearing aid

- Asking your spouse to repeat things
- TV too loud
- Difficulty hearing in noisy situations – very hard to be part of the group in a noisy restaurant
- Ringing in the ears – Tinnitus

Myths about needing an Aid

- If you don't get a hearing aid now, your brain will lose the ability to process the sounds
- According to Dr Zappler – there is little research to support this claim

Insurance and Medicare for Hearing Aids

- Generally not covered by insurance
- Covered by Medicaid
- May be covered by veterans benefits
 - ▣ One of the largest suppliers of hearing aids

The steps to solving the problem

- See an Ear Doctor – is it a medical condition or just age
- Get a hearing test by an Audiologist – define the degree of your problem
- Find someone you trust to fit a hearing aid
 - ▣ Consider getting aids from two different providers

A hearing test

- Three kinds of tests
 - ▣ Hearing of tones – low to high frequency
 - ▣ Recognition of words
 - ▣ Bone conduction
 - Helps identify a special kind of hearing loss
- Is there a sound proof booth?
- Was there a prompt in the word test?
 - ▣ “Say the word Pass” or just “Pass”

Last Name: Woolf _____

First Name: Jim _____

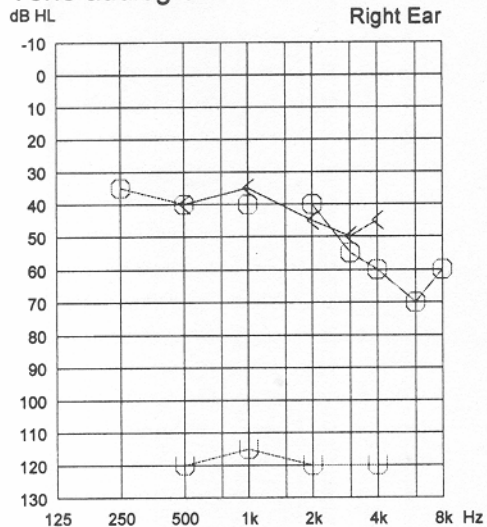
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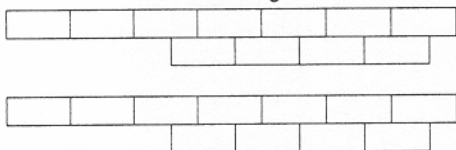
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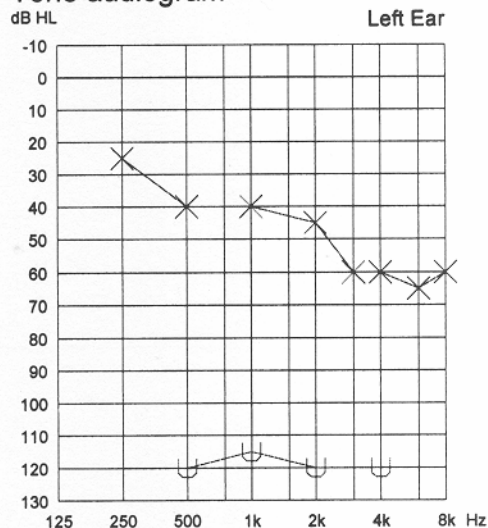
Tone audiogram



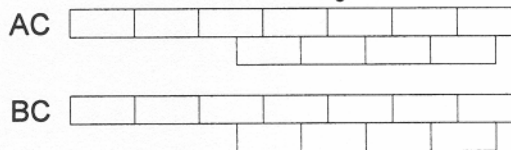
dB Masking



Tone audiogram



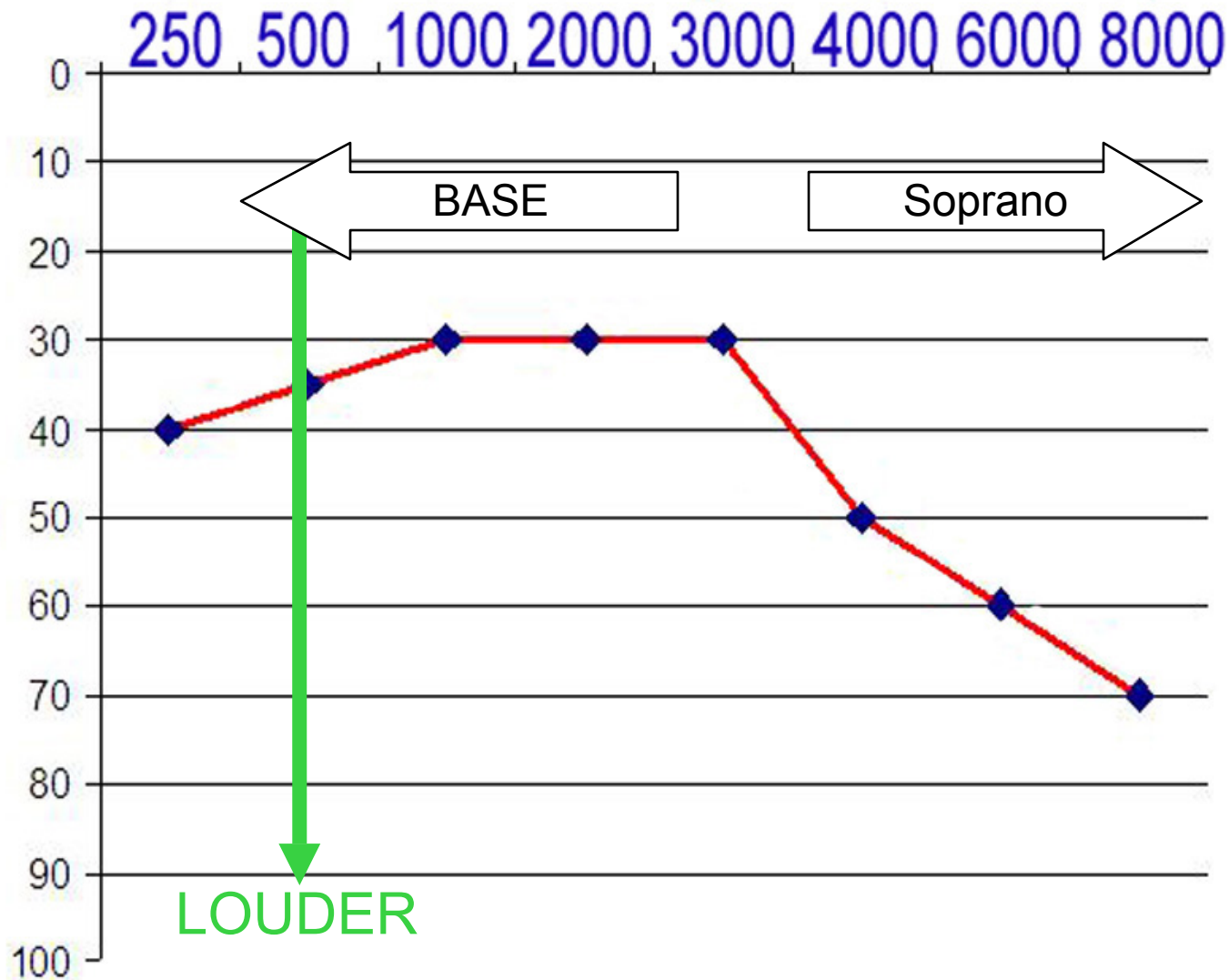
dB Masking



	Unmasked	Masked
<u>Air Conductor</u>		
Right:	○	△
Left:	×	□
<u>Air conductor MCL</u>		
Right:	△	△
Left:	×	×
<u>Air conductor UCL</u>		
Right:	□	□
Left:	○	○
<u>Bone Conductor</u>		
Right:	△	△
Left:	×	×
<u>No Response</u>		
Right:	✓	
Left:	✓	

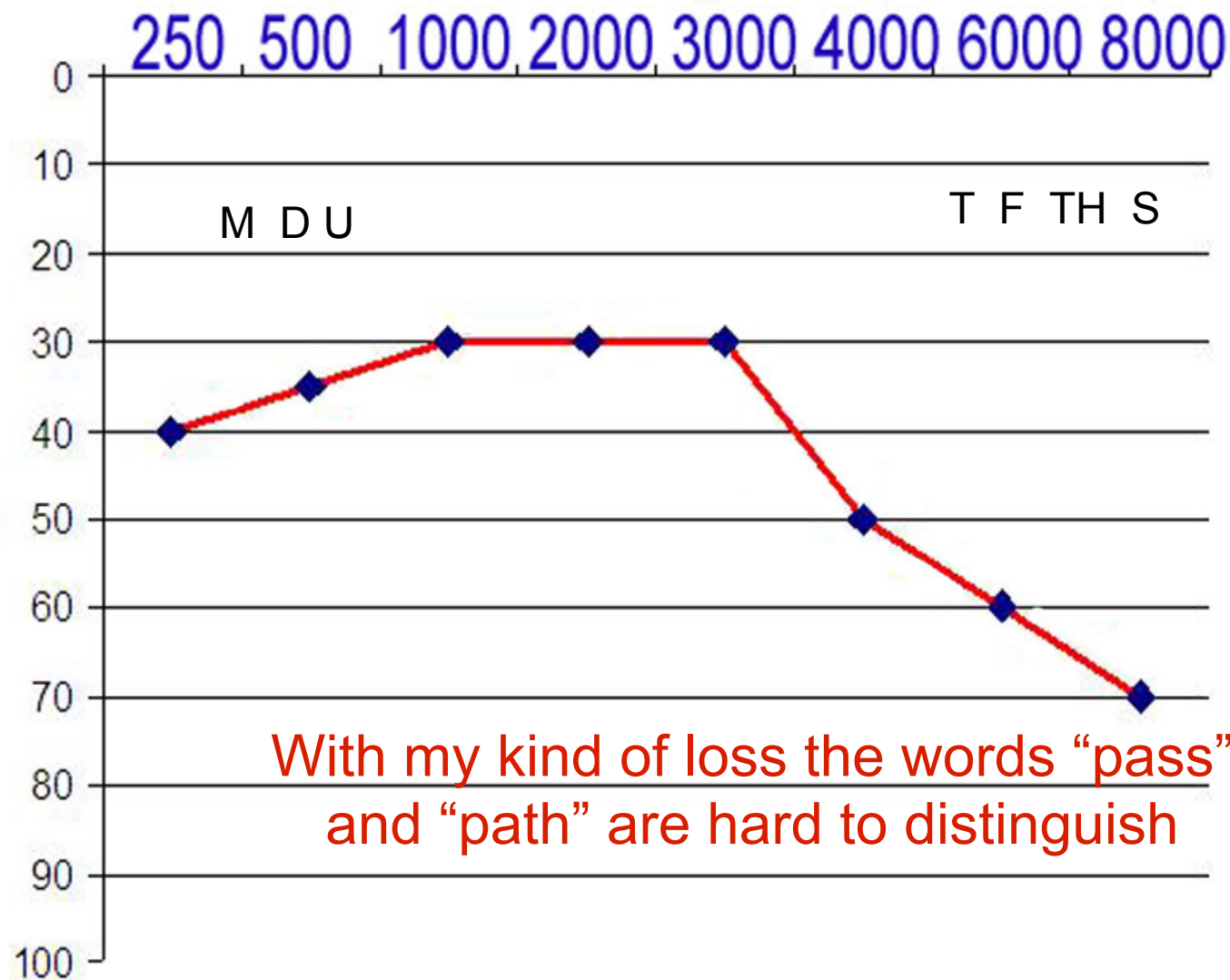
Audiogram

Frequency



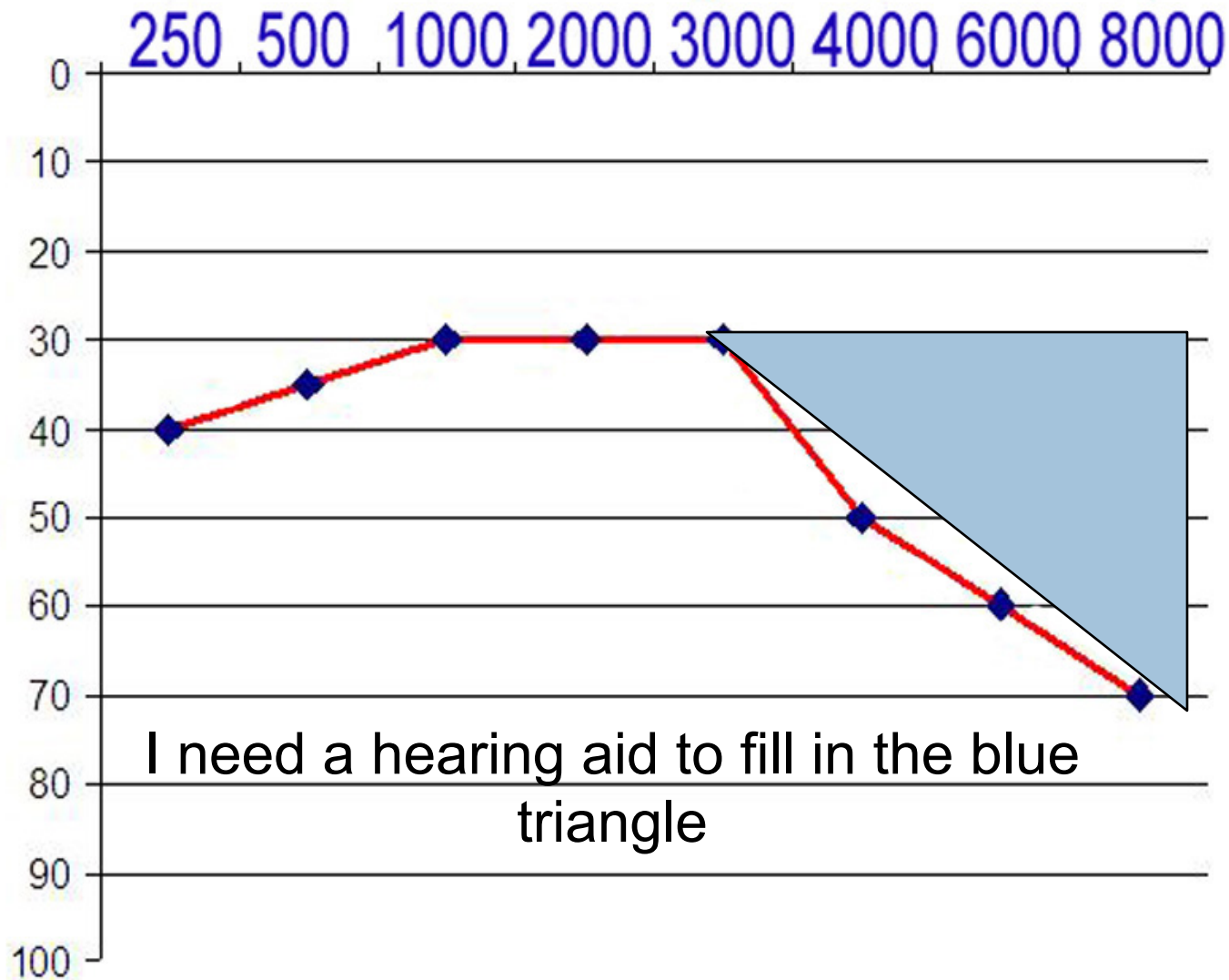
Audiogram

Frequency



Audiogram

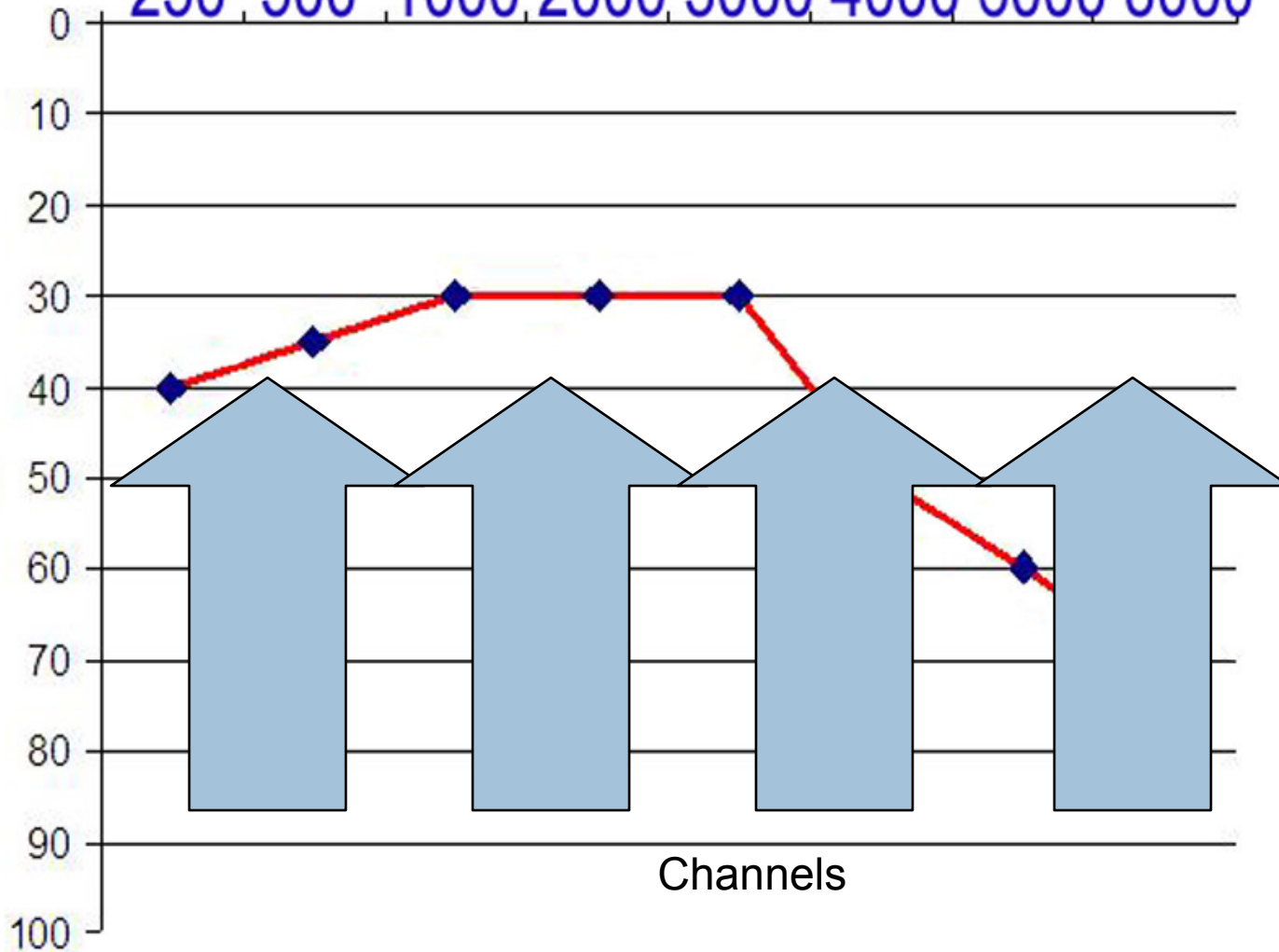
Frequency



Audiogram

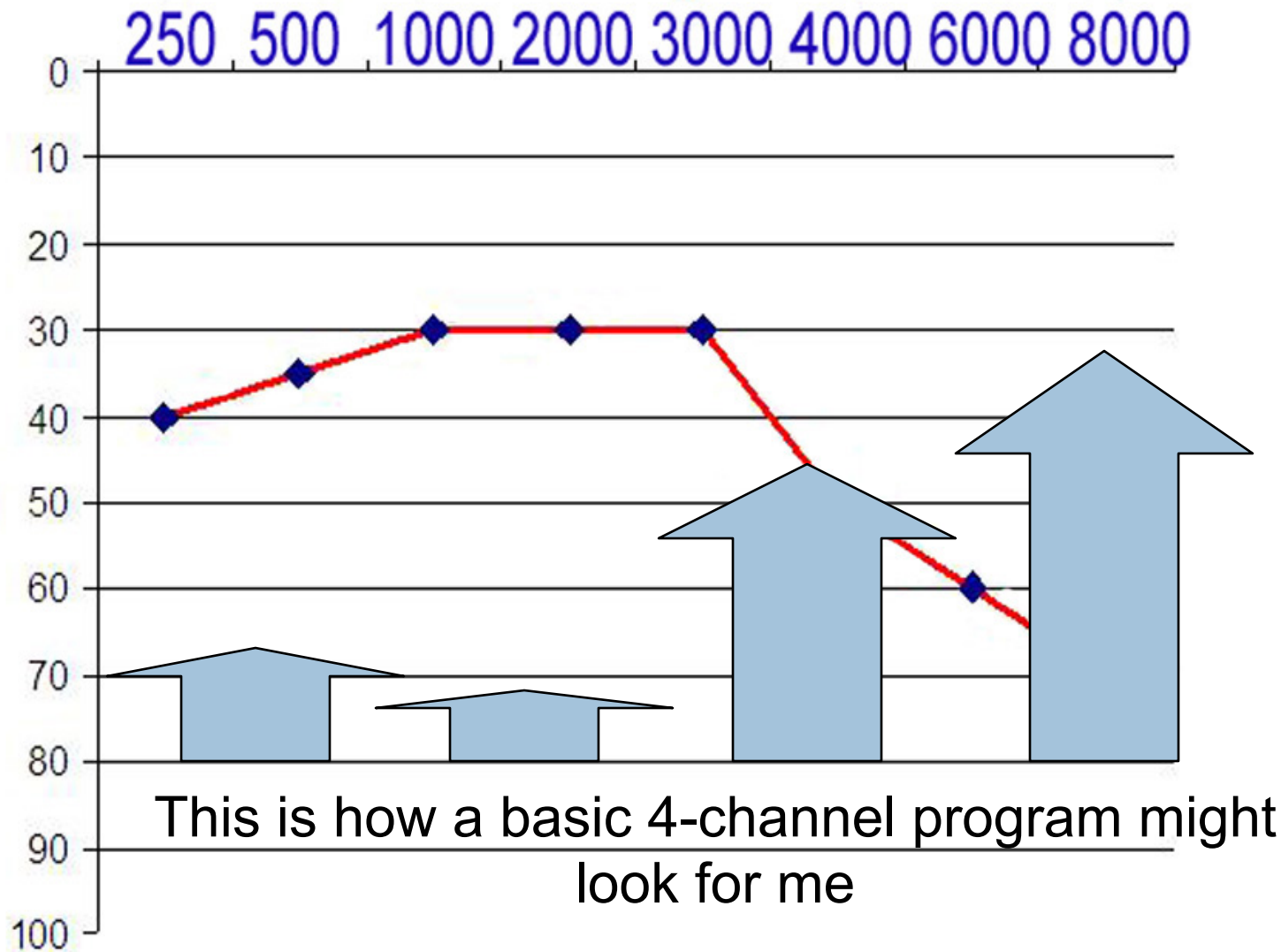
Frequency

250 500 1000 2000 3000 4000 6000 8000



Audiogram

Frequency



Ways to shop

- Research the product, select, find lowest price
- Talk to friends – get a recommendation for a Hearing Aid
- Look for a brand name you trust

None of the above will work well with hearing aids

You must find a provider you like and trust and rely on them.

Choosing a hearing aid provider is like picking a doctor or dentist.

Buying a Hearing AID

- Many makers
 - 26 Brands by 7 Major makers
 - Over 200 models on the market
- Limited consumer information on hearing aid performance or quality
 - Consumer Reports Health July 2009
 - “Our research indicates that rating hearing aid brands and models on overall performance is not possible because people with seemingly identical hearing loss may hear differently using a particular product programmed the same way.

Consumer Reports Health

July 2009

- Best summary of hearing aids I have found
 - ▣ Survey of 1100 people with aids less than 3 years old
- Listed key features of 44 aids
 - ▣ Directional mikes
 - ▣ Feedback control
 - ▣ Telephone interface
- Overviews styles of aids
- Overviews kinds of hearing aid providers

Other Features

- **Digital noise reduction** can reduce irritating background sounds
- **Low-battery indicator** sounds alert to change batteries
- **Power-on delay** helps prevent feedback
- **Wax guard**
- **Automatic volume control**
- **Manual volume control** lets you adjust volume.
- **Bluetooth capability** allows hands-free use of cell and regular phones and other electronics
- **Remote Control – volume, channel, off-on**

Consumer Reports Findings

- High prices – \$1800 to \$6800 per pair
- Poorly fitted – two thirds were too much or too little power for the user.
- Many providers did not discuss features
- Average Markup – 117% – this is your clue to bargain --40% of buyers who asked for a discount got one

The Bundle



The Bundle

- You can't buy just an aid – only a bundle including:
 - ▣ Two-year warranty
 - ▣ Two-year loss protection
 - ▣ 30-day free return
 - ▣ Unlimited office visits
 - ▣ Carry case
 - ▣ Cleaning supplies, heater,

Industry Speak

- Low Technology – Less than \$1000
- Middle – \$1000 – \$2500
- High Tech – more than \$2500

- Tell us your budget first

- I talked with providers who could not explain the products or the price differences

Types of Aids

- Behind the ear
 - open fit
- Behind the ear
 - ear mold
- Completely in the canal
- In the canal
- In the ear



Two kinds of Licenses in Texas

- Hearing aid dispenser
 - ▣ One year internship
- Audiologist
 - ▣ Advanced education – masters or doctors degree
- Know who you are dealing with – often both kinds of Licenses are in the same firm

Places to buy an Aid

- Independent Practice
 - Strong customer service
- Hearing Aid Programming Specialists
 - Fixing problem aids
 - Specialized adjustments
- Discount Club
 - Low price
 - Good service – but with a wait
 - 90 day return policy

Others

- VA – veterans – need must be related to a service connected disability
- Beltone stores – no member reports
- Internet – non prescription aids – occasional use

Texas Law

- Working for you
 - 30-day free trial
- Watch for restocking fees
 - What is your throw-away \$ limit if you get an aid that doesn't meet your needs?
- Working in someone else's interest
 - No list of consumer complaints
 - A weak list of actions
 - Appears providers can move from state to state

Additional Cost

Batteries for Hearing Aids



\$80

- Pocket Remote
- Volume Control
 - Program selection
 - Off Switch

Summary



- An expensive and complex device
- We all hear differently
- Don't buy your aids at the location where you got your first exam without shopping for other providers
- Make sure you are comfortable with the provider and the services provided

Questions?

