

February 10, 2010 – Types of Hearing Loss

The meeting was called to order at 3 PM. Margaret Hutchinson was our speaker. She began by asking people why they were there.

Hearing losses are labeled by type: conductive, sensorineural, mixed and central.

She provided diagrams of the ear for us.

Conductive losses are generally mechanical problems usually involving the outer and middle ear that can be helped with medicine and/or surgery.

Sensorineural losses involve the loss of hair cells (cilia) in the cochlea, which do not re-grow. Approximately 95% of people with sensorineural hearing loss can be helped. Sensorineural hearing losses causes include, noise, medicine, the aging process, disease or head trauma. The only treatment for sensorineural hearing loss currently is hearing aids.

Mixed hearing loss is a combination of conductive and sensorineural.

Central hearing loss is a brain problem, such as the difficulty in distinguishing speech from background noise. She mentioned that she has a central hearing loss involving distinguishing speech from background noise, and will wear some high end hearing aids when she knows that she will be encountering this situation.

She mentioned a study which showed that untreated hearing loss was positively correlated with a lower quality of life and decreased earnings.

.Then she asked for questions and discussed hearing aids and how they should be checked. “Are they really working up to the specs” Ask for real ear measurements, which test the output of the hearing aids (sounds) near the ear drum.

There are some new tests out there SPIN or Quick SIN, both of which test the performance of the hearing aids in a noisy situation. The VA has this equipment and is the largest provider of hearing loss treatment.

She encouraged those of us, whose hearing aids are not working properly, to ask the staff audiologist, why and what can be done?

In response to a question on the life of hearing aids, she replied on the average about 5 years, but there are significant changes in technology about every 18 months.

Much of her presentation can be seen on her website www.austinhearingervices.com