



WITH LOOPS, THE FUTURE IS NOW

In their article in the November 2007 *Hearing Journal*, Jerry Yanz and David Preves offer an exciting vision: The greatest promise offered by recent and coming advances in Bluetooth is that some day the technology will be small enough and sufficiently low in power demands that it can be fully incorporated into a wearable hearing aid. No additional gadgets will be needed. No relay around the neck, no module to translate the Bluetooth signal into a proprietary, and more expensive, wireless protocol. All you will need is a hearing aid. But it will also be more than a hearing aid.

As it happens, that's a terrific description of *today's* modern induction loop technology, as experienced by more and more people, not only in Britain and Scandinavia, but also in west Michigan and in other parts of the U.S. In dozens and dozens of west Michigan's public venues and worship centers, and soon throughout both concourses of Michigan's second largest airport in Grand Rapids, people need only activate their telecoils and, voila! Their hearing aids become wireless, low-power, customized loudspeakers.

These wireless applications, and more in the works (New York City is now pilot testing hearing loops in taxis), illustrate the truth of Sergei Kochkin's excellent essay in that same issue of *HJ* showing that the way to increase adoption of hearing aids is to increase their utility. Double the functionality of hearing aids—with simply operated “miniaturized internal wireless receivers in *every* hearing aid”—and word-of-mouth advertising will promote hearing aids and the stigma of hearing instruments will decline.

Audiologists Bill and Christine Diles have demonstrated the realism of Kochkin's vision by installing loops in the TV rooms of more than 1400 homes of their Sonoma County, CA, patients. By increasing the functionality of their core product (rather than selling hearing aid-

incompatible TV listening headsets) they have seen dramatically increased patient satisfaction with both TV listening *and* hearing aids (see *HJ*, May 2006). The result, thanks partly to word of mouth, is a “booming” practice, with returns of hearing aids (or should I say “TV loudspeakers”?) having dropped to near zero.

If tomorrow's wireless technology offers an alternative to today's miniaturized, low-power, affordable, wireless magnetic induction via telecoils, then bring it on! But why wait for the future?

The loop system issues raised in Carl Sandrock and Don Schum's article in your November issue are fading into the past. More and more cell phones are hearing aid-compatible, and interference from yesterday's old-ballast florescent lighting and non-flat computer screens is disappearing. With telecoils increasing (thanks partly to the popularity of BTEs), we needn't wait for tomorrow to double the functionality and appeal of hearing aids. We can do it today, with shared benefits for the hearing industry, hearing professionals, and hearing consumers. By equipping virtually all hearing aids with telecoils and by looping America, we can realize the vision of wireless assistive listening *now*.

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Editor's note

Dr. Myers, a Professor of Psychology at Hope College, also wrote about looping in our May 2006 issue. For his and the Dileses' article, which he mentions, go to www.audiologyonline.com/theHearingJournal/article_detail.asp?article_id=1646