Meet Kylee McFarlin, Au.D.

Kylee McFarlin started at Iowa Ear Center as an audiology extern while completing the final year of her clinical doctorate degree from the University of Iowa. She completed the program and earned her Doctorate of Audiology in May 2018. She sees both pediatric and adult patients of all ages for a variety of testing and device programming appointments. Kylee is a provider at our first audiology outreach clinic at Skiff Medical Center in Newton, IA, where she is available to see hearing aid patients every Wednesday from 8:00am to 4:30pm. Her main areas of interest include hearing aid amplification, cochlear implants, bone anchored hearing implants (BAHAs or osseointegrated hearing devices) and vestibular/balance assessment.

When she is not at the office, she enjoys attending group fitness classes and exploring the Des Moines area with her significant other, Dave.

Get the Most Out of Your Current Technology

Hearing device technology is constantly evolving, with new accessories and features available all the time. While hearing devices are now more powerful than ever, in order to take full advantage of all they have to offer it’s important to keep up with this latest technology. The following features and accessories all utilize state-of-the-art technology in order to provide a more efficient and hassle-free listening experience.

**Rechargeability**

Several new models of hearing devices allow the convenience of rechargeable technology, meaning you never have to change a battery again! This easy and convenient rechargeable technology provides a full day’s use with one overnight charge and allows you to hear without hassle. And if you happen to forget to charge your device one night, you can easily switch your rechargeable batteries out for disposables.

**TV Streamers**

TV streamers are a popular product for those with hearing loss and their families; they are used so everyone can have an enjoyable TV watching experience. Today’s streamers provide rich, natural sound with no delays. These devices send sound straight to your hearing aids while your family listens at a comfortable volume.

**Remote Microphones**

Remote mics help those with hearing loss hear their conversation partner in noisy backgrounds and from a distance. The microphone settings automatically adjust to the noise levels around you as well as the speaker.

**Smartphone Connectivity**

Many hearing devices can be controlled via smartphone apps, which are now available for both Apple and Android devices. Answer calls, stream music and even use voice-activated controls directly from your smartphone through your devices.
New Looping Technology Helps Patients with Hearing Devices Hear in “the Room Where it Happens”

The musical “Hamilton” recently took Des Moines by storm and the Civic Center’s use of a hearing loop ensured that the performance could “blow us all away” – including those patrons with hearing loss.

Today’s digital hearing aids effectively enhance hearing in conversational settings, but the sound can become unclear when speakers are at a distance, when the context is noisy or when room acoustics reverberate sound. A hearing loop – a loop of cable around a designated area – generates a magnetic field that is picked up by a hearing aid or cochlear implant. The loop transfers the microphone or sound signal to the t-coil, a thin strand of copper wire found in most hearing devices. The t-coil delivers the audio content straight to your device so you can hear the content and cut out the background noise.

In addition to the Civic Center, there are already many locations using hearing loops including the Ames public library, Cinemark 20 Jordan Creek movie theatre in West Des Moines and numerous churches in central Iowa. Many hearing advocacy groups are now pushing for a complete renovation in all public spaces to enhance the benefits of hearing devices in loud environments.

As more and more cases of hearing loss are diagnosed and hearing devices with a t-coil switch become standard, the motivation for businesses to jump on the hearing loop bandwagon will increase. This means good things for those who suffer from hearing loss. As looping installation becomes more prevalent, hearing device users will experience an entirely new level of ease in everyday life.

(Don’t throw away your shot at better hearing!
A list of looped venues can be found on our website at www.iowaearcenter.com)

Recent Research Findings Prove Link Between Hearing Loss and Cognitive Health

While cognitive disorders were once believe to be primarily linked to the natural aging process, new research indicates that other factors may significantly affect cognitive health. Several of these recent studies have been conducted on the link between hearing loss and cognitive disorders.

In one study, the U.S. National Institute on Aging and Johns Hopkins University monitored 600 patients for signs of dementia over four years, discovering that patients older than 60 with hearing loss had a 35 percent higher risk of developing dementia than those with normal hearing. In addition, those with moderate to severe hearing loss developed cognitive disorders at a higher rate.1

Another recent study from Johns Hopkins University included more than 2,000 men and women age 75–84 and lasted over six years. It found that cognitive abilities among those with hearing loss declined 30-40 percent faster than in people with normal hearing.2

These findings coincide with yet another study, published in 2014 and led by Dr. Richard Gurgel of University of Utah Health Care, who conducted research on more than 4,400 men and women ages 65 and older. This study showed that those with hearing loss at the beginning of the study developed dementia at a higher rate and earlier than those without a hearing loss.3

Now that this link is established, researchers are working to determine how treating hearing loss can be used to prevent or delay the onset of dementia.

Researchers are in the midst of several long-term studies regarding the cognitive health effects of treating hearing loss with hearing aids. Even as these studies are underway, audiologists understand the importance of preventing cognitive decline early by treating a hearing loss as soon as it’s detected. With the right combination of early detection and effective hearing loss treatment, we can help patients regain control over their cognitive health.

On September 15 of 2013, during a home game against the rival San Francisco 49ers, the Seattle Seahawks fans reached a decibel level of 131.9, breaking the previous Guinness World Record for crowd noise of 131.7 decibels, set by fans at a soccer match in Istanbul, Turkey in 2011.

Four weeks later, the Kansas City Chiefs organized a "scream-a-thon" and topped the Seahawks’ record at 137.5 decibels. The Seahawks responded with a new record of their own, 137.6 decibels, on December 1, reclaiming the title.

Supporting your team in a friendly rivalry can be fun but it’s important to remember: anything over 85 decibels is considered hazardous to your hearing. Indeed, exposure to 130 decibels for more than a fraction of a second destroys the tiny hair cells in your ears. Damage is irreversible and may lead to tinnitus (ringing in the ears), permanent hearing loss, intolerance to loud noises or ear pain.

So, while fans may boast, “Be LOUD AND PROUD and blow my eardrums out!”, they really should keep in mind the long-term effects of crowd noise. The current record is louder than a jackhammer, and not far off from 150 decibels, at which point your eardrums are at risk of rupturing.

Audiologists recommend you carry earplugs or protective headphones with you when attending such events. They can decrease sounds by 20 decibels or more, making a substantial difference.

Please call our office if you have any questions at 515-418-9960.

HOME REMEDIES: FICTION AND FACT

In tight economic times with numerous health and wellness blogs suggesting do-it-yourself home remedies, with many patients skipping visits to their doctor’s office in favor of a do-it-yourself approach. However, there are misconceptions and concerns about many of these home remedies.

EAR CANDLING/CONING
This alternative medicine technique involves using a cone-shaped device placed in the ear canal while smoke or a burning wick extracts earwax and other impurities. In theory, a pressure vacuum is created to suction wax and debris out of the ear canal. Researchers investigating the popular technique have found it doesn’t create negative pressure of any kind, but rather produces external burns, ear canal blockage and perforated eardrums.

SINUS RINSES/NASAL IRRIGATION
While this home remedy is far more common and less dangerous than ear candling, it is still a procedure that can be dangerous if done improperly. The biggest risk is the use of improperly sanitized water. In recent years at least two people died when exposed to Naegleria fowleri, a deadly amoeba common in rivers and lakes. Water used during nasal irrigation should be distilled or boiled and then cooled.

EARACHE DROPS
Homeopathic earache drops are one of the safest home remedies. Most are made of citric acid, water, sodium and chamomile. These ingredients are oftentimes effective in relieving pain caused by an earache. This solution is temporary, however, and should not be used for those experiencing chronic ear pain or infections.