



The newsletter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, Albuquerque Chapter

# WIRED FOR SOUND

## A Cure For Hearing Loss?

*Howard I. Hirsch, HLAA Albuquerque board member*

We are all interested in a possible cure for hearing loss. Have you ever wondered if one day future generations or perhaps even you yourself could hear within a normal range without the use of hearing aids, cochlear implants, or other hearing assistance devices? The following research I present is making this possibility a step closer to making our hopes and dreams a realization.

In May 2018 a New England biotech company announced that it had received a grant from the Department of Defense to research a therapeutic opportunity that may help reverse hearing loss.

A 2015 study of almost 50,000 soldiers showed that peak noise levels in combat can reach 180 dB. Combat veterans have a 63% increased risk for hearing loss. Two and a half million veterans have service-connected hearing disabilities.

Clearly there is a need for treatment.

Frequency Therapeutics based in Woburn, Mass. and Farmington, Ct. announced that it had received a \$2 million grant from the Department of Defense to investigate the restoration of hearing after noise-related damage as a result of injuries related to military service.

Frequency's technique, Progenitor Cell Activation (PCA) Regeneration, uses a combination of small-molecule drugs to stimulate inner ear progenitor cells to multiply and create new hair cells. Hair cell regeneration happens spontaneously in fish and birds, but not mammals.

Humans are born with only 15,000 hair cells in each ear and do not develop any more after birth. Damage to these hair cells over time results in a loss of hearing. Figuring out how to make regener-



ation happen in mammals would be a major step towards finding a cure for hearing loss, and this goal is being pursued by others in addition to Frequency.

In December of 2017, Frequency announced the completion of the first in-human safety and tolerance study of its proprietary Druid combination, FX-322. The drug is injected into the inner ear using a standard intratympanic injection, with the patient awake. The Phase 1 trial was conducted at Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital in Melbourne, Australia on 9 adults with severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss who were scheduled for cochlear implant surgery 24 hours after receiving the injection.

In the press release announcing the Department of Defense grant, Frequency noted that the PCA Regeneration platform targets the root cause of disease without removing stem cells or gene therapy, which can affect cells other than those targeted. Frequency's FX-322 awakens the dormant progenitor cells already in the ear, initiating cell division and differentiation to repair the damaged hair cells.

Frequency hopes this technique can be used elsewhere in the body as well, to restore healthy tissue, and it has a number of other programs in development including preclinical research in muscle regeneration and type 1 diabetes. Frequency plans to initiate a Phase 2 trial for shearing regeneration in the U.S. later this year.

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**16 Mar meeting** 9:30 am - noon; details on back page**Captioned Phones**

See the latest features and current plans for new products from two providers. Come join us to hear from ClearCaption and from CapTel representatives who will share the latest products and also provide demonstrations. Learning about phones for those of us who have trouble hearing on the phone is one of the most frequently requested programs. Don't miss it !

**Coming up:****April 13: Tinnitus.**

Is this a sentence for life? Are the cures advertised in airline magazines real? How does a hearing aid help with that horrible ringing in the ears? Our speaker, Leah Fry is an audiologist who is a specialist in tinnitus. Come and learn about the relationship between tinnitus and hearing loss.

**May 18: Vestibular Rehabilitation. What?**

Many people who suffer from hearing loss find it is accompanied with balance and dizziness issues, which most assume is something you'll just have to live with. Dr. Morgan Fry will talk about how treatment of dizziness and balance issues is possible. Dr. Fry is a Doctor in Physical Therapy with specialty skills in vestibular rehabilitation.

**Future topics in the works:**

- **Hearing loss progression** – from “mild hearing loss” to “deaf” with the stages, and technology advances that apply to each stage
- **Couples panel** – we will hear from a panel with the hearing partners who can identify the challenges they face living with a person with hearing loss

**Announcement for Santa Fe HLAA Chapter meeting**

Date: Mar 16 10:00 a.m.

Speakers: Caitlynne Gentry AuD and Tara Harmon  
McElheney AuD

Topic: Hearing Aids—Future Choices

Location: Santa Fe Association of Realtors located at  
510 N. Guadalupe St. (North of DeVargas Mall)

This grant applies only to military personnel with service-related hearing loss. Of course, if the technique is found to work, it would be available to others with sensorineural hearing loss. More than

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## Meet a Board Member

Hi! I am Dr. Norm Dawson, a retired chiropractor and Board Member of HLAA's Abq. Chapter. I have been an Albuquerque native for over 50 years and was a member of SHHH (before it became HLAA) and served as president of the chapter for about 3 years. I've been married for 39 years. I have 5 children; two are hearing impaired.

I started out life as a small child, and my parents discovered a slight hearing loss at age 5. Based on my knowledge of science and embryology, I believe my mom, who worked in an ammunition factory during WWII, was exposed to the nasty chemicals in the factory, and some of her eggs were damaged from environmental toxins. Since there was no known family history of hearing loss, her environmental toxicity manifested in me.

As my hearing became worse over time, I learned how to lip read and faked it in conversations. At age 13 I became my own my own self-advocate and basically told my dad that I would not attend any more school classes unless I got a hearing aid!

By age 18 I needed two hearing aids, (both with T-coils). I tried to attend college but was not committed, and my hearing continued to decline. Finally at age 27 all my hearing was pretty much gone. At that point hearing aids were useless. I went back to college and learned sign language as a second language, using sign language interpreters in all my classes. I earned a bachelor's degree,

48 million Americans of all ages have some degree of hearing loss. This study is one of many efforts to find a biological cure for hearing loss.

**Amazon Smile** You can donate to the Albuquerque Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America every time you make a purchase of most of the products from Amazon.

Go to <http://www.hlaabq.com/amazonsmile.html> for more information and detailed instructions on how to designate HLAA-ABQ Chapter as your charity of choice when you make [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) purchases.

Once you have set it up, always log into [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) to purchase from amazon. 0.5% of the purchase price is automatically donated to HLAA Albuquerque Chapter—at no cost to you.

then another one in Human Anatomy and finally a Doctor of Chiropractic degree. Additionally, I became an advocate for other people with disabilities and successfully used the federal laws to help me prevail.

Twenty-five years later, I learned that cochlear implants had improved so much that I could hear on the phone again. I felt like I had had a Rip Van Winkle experience and “woke up” to hearing again after I got my first cochlear implant at age 51. I got my second one at age 67. While not able to hear “perfectly,” I do pretty well. Rarely do I use sign language, and I now teach anatomy and physiology part-part-time at a local vocational school. I am still an advocate, and I share a presentation about the effects of hearing loss and possible dementia to various service organizations. For fun, I occasionally perform on stage in community theater and I belong to a ukulele group.

I have learned a lot during this process.

1. I acquired the belief that I would hear again. Back in the day I was told it was delusional to think this way.
2. I became more tolerant and supportive of others.
3. I am extremely grateful for all the support I have received during my challenges with my hearing loss.

4. I learned to seek a way to see things differently. *Rich*, “Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”
5. I embraced a saying that my father gave me as a youngster. From Napoleon Hill, *Think and Grow*

## WHO issues a new guideline to protect hearing

*Mary Clark, HLAA Abq President*

The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a new guideline called “[Safe Listening Devices and systems: a WHO-ITU Standard](#)”. According to the WHO, nearly 1.1 billion young people worldwide between the ages of 12 and 35 are at risk of hearing loss due to prolonged and excessive exposure to loud sounds. This figure includes young people who listen to music through personal audio devices including smartphones.

March 3 is World Hearing Day, and this standard will be released on that day. The standard recommends that personal audio devices include:

- “Sound allowance” function: software that tracks the level and duration of the user’s exposure to sound as a percentage used of a reference exposure.
- Personalized profile: an individualized listening profile, based on the user’s listening practices, which informs the user of how safely (or not) he or she has been listening, and gives cues for action based on this information.
- Volume limiting options: options to limit the volume, including automatic volume reduction and parental volume control.
- General information: information and guidance to users on safe listening practices, both through personal audio devices and for other leisure activities.

The WHO-ITU (International Telecommunication Union) developed the standard drawing on the latest evidence and consultations with a range of stakeholders, including experts from government, industry, consumers and civil society. WHO rec-

ommends that governments and manufacturers adopt the voluntary WHO-ITU standard.

Raising awareness of the risks of listening to loud sounds should have a boost now that there is a voluntary standard that identifies limits of time and volume that are safer to protect hearing. We can each do our part by encouraging the young people we know to take care of their hearing. It’s not just headphones and earbuds that can cause hearing loss. Spending a few hours in some sports stadiums as well as in some entertainment venues and/or restaurants can also contribute to hearing loss. One study showed that servers in restaurants with very loud music showed signs of hearing loss that increased the longer they worked at the restaurant.

“Given that we have the technological know-how to prevent hearing loss, it should not be the case that so many young people continue to damage their hearing while listening to music. They must understand that once they lose their hearing, it won’t come back. This new WHO-ITU standard will do much to better safeguard these young consumers as they go about doing something they enjoy.”

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Gghebreyesus,  
WHO Director General

HoH aren’t the only ones who misunderstand. A WWII co-pilot was giving his bombardier the cold shoulder for his whole tour. When the bombardier was about to ship out, he told the Lt “I have to know: what did I do to make you hate me so much?”

“Well, my first day here, I overheard you tell the pilot that you like to tie a co-pilot to one of the bombs, because they make a blood-curdling scream all the way down.”

The Sgt slapped his forehead and emphatically said “Coke bottle!”

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The Hearing Loss Association of America is a volunteer association of Hard of Hearing people, their relatives and friends. It is a non-profit, non-sectarian educational organization devoted to the welfare and interest of those who cannot hear well. Membership in the national organization is by annual dues, which are separate from the annual Chapter fee paid to your local chapter. National membership includes a subscription to the bimonthly publication Hearing Life.

For more information: [www.HearingLoss.org](http://www.HearingLoss.org) (301)657-2248 voice.



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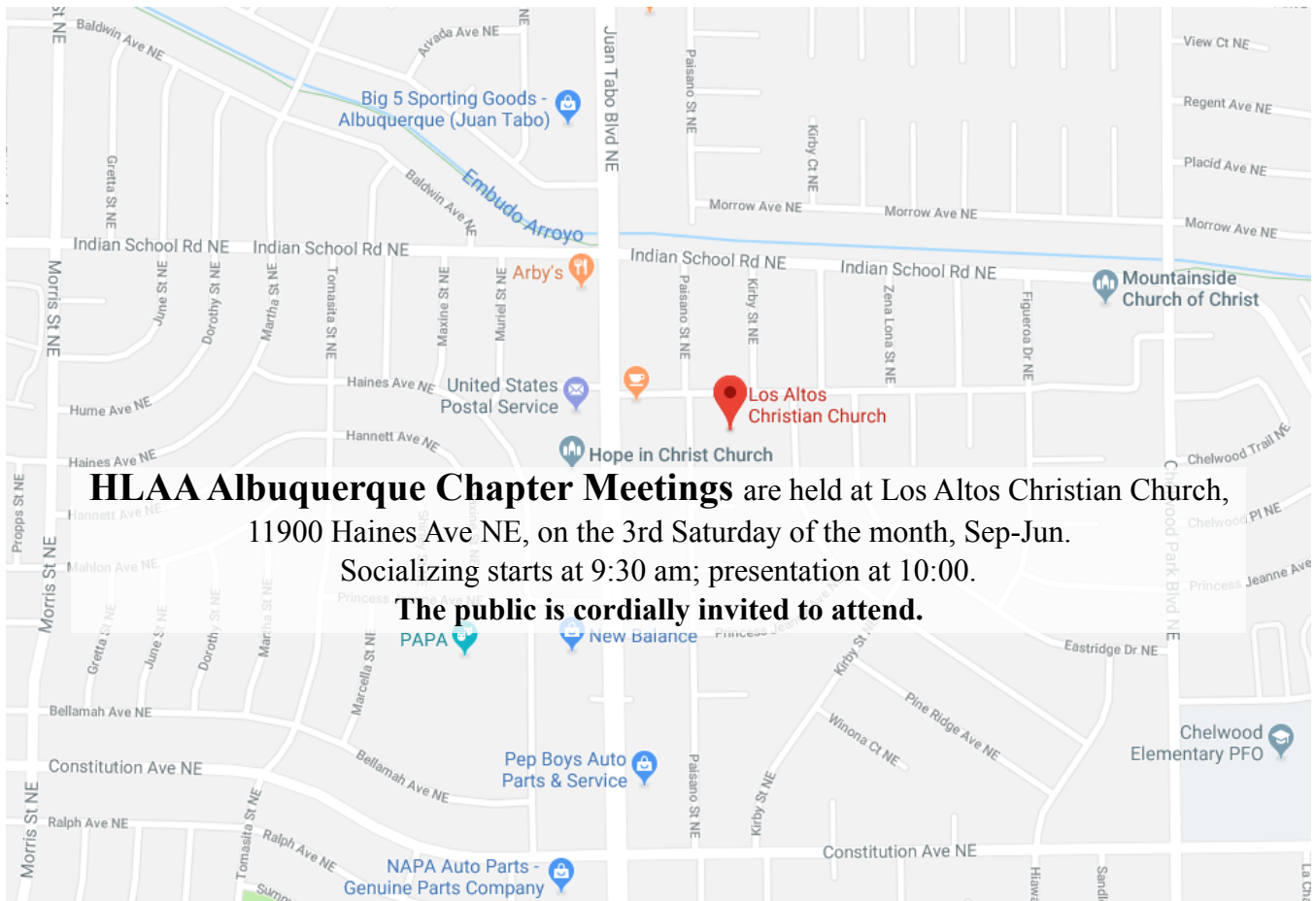
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