Given the magnitude of this condition, it is essential to explore all the disciplines whose efforts to manage the subjective symptoms of tinnitus may contribute to success. Psychology is one of these disciplines. However, a few dilemmas exist. First, how does the professional, with comfort and confidence, present to the patient the value of addressing the psychological aspects of their condition, without the patient feeling they have been told, "It is all in your head?" The patient understandably wonders how a psychologist can help them with a problem they believe originates in their ears! Indeed, such a dilemma, if ignored, could potentially be a lost opportunity for change, symptom maintenance and hope.

Treatment plans often ignore the significance of a psychological perspective. Generally, a patient looks for a tangible, physical solution for what they believe is solely a medical condition. A trained professional seeks to diagnose and treat the physical aspects of a disease or condition. In the absence of a surgical, pharmaceutical or audiological cure for the patient's problem, the challenge is knowing what else to provide in terms of reassurance and relief. Unfortunately, both professionals and patients may have thought at this point that they were at the "end of the road" in terms of options for care.

Traditional treatment approaches tend to address physical symptoms. This can reduce or alleviate other stressors associated with the tinnitus, for example depression, anxiety and insomnia. This benefit could come from audiological devices, such as sound therapies, alternative interventions, dental adjustments, supplements or medications. However, even after treatment, many patients return to their health care professional feeling discouraged, frustrated and desperate for someone to do something now. Unfortunately, what they often hear is, "There is nothing else that can be done." This may also be the point when a patient's health care professional suggests to the patient that they are going to have to "learn to live with it." Such a message can quickly diminish hope, leaving the patient feeling misunderstood and afraid that things cannot improve. Many seek out second and third opinions looking for both validation and a personal cure. The patient is at risk for developing depression and anxiety as they live within a vicious cycle of feeling hopeless.

It is obvious, that until there is a cure, people do need to live with their tinnitus. However, without offering tools to help patients do just that, they are left struggling in despair.

The Value of Validation

Naturally, patients want a professional to alleviate their physical suffering. They also want acknowledgment of the countless ways tinnitus has influenced their quality of life. As professionals, we must...
recognize that their suffering is not only physical; we must also address their emotional well-being, as part of the overall management of their condition. Without a referral to counseling, patients often lack coping strategies and remain distressed.

Distress caused by a life with tinnitus can manifest itself in the following ways:

- Emotional: feelings of depression, anger, irritability, anxiety, distress, fear, sadness, panic, loneliness, helplessness, worry, vulnerability, grief reactions and despair.
- Cognitive: difficulty concentrating, impaired memory, obsessive attention/preoccupation with tinnitus, stuck in negative thought patterns and distorted beliefs.
- Social: increased isolation and withdrawal from recreation and other pleasurable activities.
- Occupational: stress due to changes in identity, role, income and employment.
- Interpersonal: avoidance of friends and family, marital strain, increased conflict, deterioration of communication.
- Physical: increased somatic complaints including headaches, muscle tension and insomnia.

**The Role of Counseling**

A psychological assessment and individualized intervention are important components of a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach to maximize treatment resources.

Each treatment team member, including the patient, has a role in the successful management of tinnitus. There is value in learning additional coping skills in combination with the improvements made through other therapies. The role of counseling is to help the patient learn how to address the ways in which tinnitus is affecting their life, facilitate change and help the patient successfully manage their tinnitus. This is a critical point in the interaction between patient and professional; one that creates a bridge that offers hope and choices for the patient beyond eliminating the sound.

**Challenges Getting To The Bridge of Hope**

Psychologists and other professionals can encounter resistance or confusion as to the patient’s understanding of the value of counseling. Patients often base their resistance on unfortunate stigmas and myths about counseling and their own personal feelings about disclosure. A few things are necessary to avoid defensiveness on the part of the patient. The health care professional must explain the rationale for counseling and its potential benefits while stressing the fact that though tinnitus originates in their body – the ear and brain – there is an intricate connection between the body and the mind. Unlike an internally produced sound like tinnitus, that the patient cannot directly control, our thoughts and behaviors are within our power to change. For example, the patient’s reaction to their tinnitus may be creating and exacerbating some of their stress. In other words, what the patient tells themselves about their tinnitus is influencing how much power the condition has over them. Without being aware of this factor, the patient can easily allow their tinnitus to take on a life of its own. Many need help developing the necessary skills to take charge of their life again.

---

**Did you know?**

You can read *Tinnitus Today* online.

The journal is available, in PDF form, in the Members Only section of our Web site, www.ata.org.

If you would like to read the PDF in larger type, go up to the left-hand corner where a box shows the screen magnification. Just adjust it to a percentage that is comfortable for you.

**Migraine-Meniere-Tinnitus Clinic**

We identify and treat the causes and triggers of tinnitus

Soraya Hoover, M.D., Medical Director

At the Migraine-Meniere-Tinnitus Clinic, we focus our diagnosis & treatment on the patient’s physiological, pathological and anatomical malfunctions of their nose, sinuses and Eustachian tubes. Treatment corrections aim to normalize functions and equalize the nasal airway. This may take three to 10 days.

We accept most Medical insurance plans. Please call for more information.

Dr. Hoover is a Fellow of the American Academy of Otolaryngology, Board of Allergy & Environmental Medicine and Royal Society of Medicine, London, and a Diplomat of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Dr. Hoover has served the Houston area for 25 years, spoken in over 26 countries and published in numerous medical journals, such as:

- International Rhinology. Supplement 2.all.1987
- Tinnitus & Allergy. Proc II International Tinnitus Seminar, Munster, Germany. 1987. Publisher, Harch V. Karlsruhe

**Shepherd Exit – 5151 Katy Freeway, Suite 300, Houston, TX 77002**

**Call (713) 626-4999 to make an appointment**

www.tinnitus-menieresclinic.com/index.htm

http://www.headache-migraineclinic.com

ATA does not endorse or recommend any tinnitus products or treatments.
Special Donors and Tributes

Continued from page 15

The Bridge to Hope: The Psychologist's Role in Treating Tinnitus

Both the patient and the professional must be able to address aspects of the patient's life that are difficult and untreated in order to enhance improvements gained from other tinnitus therapies. This process helps determine whether the patient falls into passive acceptance and feelings of victimization or feels empowered with another treatment approach. Counseling offers the patient strategies to improve their quality of life while accepting that the sounds of their tinnitus may not change or be resolved. The professional needs to reinforce that exploring their symptoms from a psychological perspective can facilitate ways to reclaim mastery over aspects of their lives.

Each discipline plays an essential, valuable role in the successful management of tinnitus. Incorporating a psychological component to the treatment plan teaches the patient the skills that can improve their quality of life and reintroduce hope. The therapeutic relationship can empower the tinnitus patient to go beyond living with it; they can cross a bridge to hope and learn to live a quality life again while successfully managing their tinnitus.

Deborah R. Lain, B.A., M.S., is a registered psychologist and writer in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. She offers a specialized tinnitus program using a cognitive behavioral therapy approach. Deborah is passionate about inspiring people with tinnitus to experience hope and improved quality of life. You may reach her at www.hopetinnitus.com or e-mail Deborah at LainDr@hotmail.com.
Since 1971, the American Tinnitus Association has been supporting tinnitus research and providing our members with up-to-date resources.

We encourage you to visit our newly-designed ATA Store at www.ata.org

**PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT**

- **Tinnitus: A Self-Management Guide For the Ringing In Your Ears**
  - By Jack L. Henry, Ph.D. and Peter H. Wilson, Ph.D.
  - (50.00 ATA Members / $60.00 Non-members)
  - *Very limited quantities!*
  - Anger, fear, depression and anxiety are common emotional reactions to tinnitus. The authors explain when tinnitus patients identify their thoughts specifically in response to their tinnitus, it helps patients reduce the perceived negative meaning of tinnitus. (209 pages, soft cover)

  **NOTE:** This book, currently out of print, was utilized in an ATA-funded research study on 'bibliotherapy.' (See page 7 in this issue for details!)

- **Ototoxic Drugs Exposed (Second Edition)**
  - By Neil G. Bauman, Ph.D.
  - (37.50 ATA Members / $39.99 Non-members)
  - Ototoxic Drugs Exposed reveals the shocking truth that some prescription drugs can, and do, damage ears far more than anyone imagines. This comprehensive book reveals the ear-damaging side effects of 743 drugs, 30 herbs and 148 chemicals. (634 pages, soft cover)

- **Mayo Clinic on Better Hearing and Balance**
  - By Wayne Olsen, Ph.D.
  - (29.95 ATA Members / $32.95 Non-members)
  - Frequently, hearing loss and balance problems are complications of illness, disease, medication, trauma, noise exposure or the normal process of aging. This book provides useful strategies that help you prevent, treat and cope with many ear disorders, including tinnitus, imbalance and vertigo. (254 pages, hard cover)

- **Ototoxic Drugs Exposed**
  - By Neil G. Bauman, Ph.D.
  - (37.50 ATA Members / $39.99 Non-members)
  - Reveals the shocking truth that some drugs, 30 herbs and 148 chemicals can, and do, damage ears far more than anyone imagines. This comprehensive book reveals the ear-damaging side effects of 743 drugs, 30 herbs and 148 chemicals. (634 pages, soft cover)

- **HoMedics SoundSpa**
  - ($22.99 ATA Members / $24.99 Non-members)
  - With six digitally recorded natural sounds (ocean, summer night, rain, rain forest, waterfall, and heartbeat) the SoundSpa will help you relax while you read, work, study or sleep. Battery or adapter operated (adapter included, four “AA” batteries not included).

- **The Sounds of the Sea on Deal Beach (CD)**
  - ($10.00 ATA Members / $12.00 Non-members)
  - People distressed by their tinnitus often find it more intrusive in a quiet environment. Sound therapy may help by reducing the contrast between tinnitus and silence, helping the auditory system become less 'tuned in' to tinnitus. Produced by Andy Horne of Swerve Digital Audio in Deal, Kent, U.K.

- **Sound Therapy (CDs)**
  - ($10.00 each ATA Members / $12.00 each Non-members)
  - Each white noise CD provides one full hour of some of the most relaxing and soothing sounds you’ll ever experience. Whether you purchase one or all of these ear-pleasing white noise albums, you’ll enjoy their calming and sound-masking benefits. Choose from Pure White Noise, Rainy Night Rain or Soothing Shower.

**POPULAR ITEMS**

**BOOKS**

- **Tinnitus: Questions and Answers**
  - By ATA co-founder Jack A. Vernon, Ph.D., and Barbara Tabachnick Sanders
  - (50.00 ATA Members / $55 Non-members)
  - The authors answer hundreds of real questions clearly and accurately on topics of urgent interest to people with tinnitus. They base their answers on referenced research and the experienced of thousands of patients. (266 pages, soft cover)

- **The Sounds of Tinnitus (CD)**
  - With Peter Graves and Dr. Donna Wayner
  - (10.00 ATA Members / $12.00 Non-members)
  - Track One, a 24-minute conversation between actor Peter Graves and audiologist Donna Wayner, Ph.D., answers many questions tinnitus patients ask. Track Two is 30 minutes of tinnitus-like sounds to help bridge the gap between those who experience tinnitus and those who don’t.

**CDs**

- **Tinnitus: A Self-Management Guide For the Ringing In Your Ears**
  - By Jack L. Henry, Ph.D. and Peter H. Wilson, Ph.D.
  - (50.00 ATA Members / $60.00 Non-members)
  - Very limited quantities!
  - Anger, fear, depression and anxiety are common emotional reactions to tinnitus. The authors explain when tinnitus patients identify their thoughts specifically in response to their tinnitus, it helps patients reduce the perceived negative meaning of tinnitus. (209 pages, soft cover)

**ATA MEMBERS**

Buy the book and CD together and save!