

Media Release

The Oticon Foundation

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PACIFIC CHILDREN WITH HEARING LOSS TARGETED

Pacific children with hearing impairment and their families are being targeted with new information in Samoan and Tongan to help get the most from a child's hearing aids.

The Oticon Foundation is launching information booklets *Au Meafaalogo* and *Ko Ho'o Me'a-Fanongo* "Your Hearing Aids - a guide for helping children and their families understand and take care of their hearing aids" in Samoan and Tongan today as part of 2008 Deaf Awareness week.

"We want to break down barriers that can be created as a result of hearing impairment. Feedback from audiologists, educationalists and the community suggested provision of information for children and families where the Samoan and Tongan languages is spoken may help," says Karen Pullar, Secretary to the Trustees of the Oticon Foundation.

The Your Hearing Aids Otikids booklet provides tips and hints about how to look after your hearing aids and what to do to keep them in shape.

The resource is also available in English and te reo Māori.

"We know that Māori and Pacific Island children are much more likely to experience hearing loss than other children," says Ms Pullar.

It is estimated that approximately:

- 2 to 3 children in every 1000 wear hearing aids
- Pasifika children are also over-represented in hearing loss statistics.

Copies of the booklets are available at the Oticon Foundation website

http://www.oticon.org.nz/pdf/90647283_tongan.pdf and

http://www.oticon.org.nz/pdf/90647284ok_Samoan_cbr.pdf.

The Oticon Foundation is putting the spotlight on hearing loss and deafness in young New Zealanders during 2008 Deaf Awareness Week.

"New generations are putting themselves at risk of hearing loss. We support the need to prevent hearing impairment, detect issues early and take steps early to help improve the quality of life of those who do experience hearing loss," says Ms Pullar.

The Oticon Foundation grants for 2008 include support to help ensure the national newborn hearing screening programme is effective.

“Our grants including funding for the Project Hiedi team which was original set up to advocate for a national newborn hearing screening programme. Now that this programme is being implemented the next challenge is to ensure it is monitored and evaluated and workforce issues and development are progressed.”

The Foundation has helped bring an international expert to New Zealand to share lessons from Canada’s newborn hearing screening programme and has supported a Spring Symposium at the Oticon Foundation Hearing Education Centre at the University of Auckland focussed on the early intervention of children with hearing loss.

More information about the 2008 grants can be found at http://www.oticon.org.nz/pdf/Soundscape_Sep08.pdf.

The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand was established in October 1976. It is a charitable trust of Oticon New Zealand Limited and aims to improve the lives of the hearing impaired in New Zealand through communication and knowledge. It is committed to finding better solutions to hearing loss and strives to increase public awareness and understanding of hearing impairment.

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For more information please contact: Karen Pullar, Secretary to the Oticon Foundation in New Zealand. Email: info@oticon.org.nz, Telephone (04) 473 3330 or or Mobile 021 647 330.