

Oticon Foundation Hearing Education Centre activities 2003-2013

The Oticon Foundation Hearing Education Centre was established in late 2003 following a very generous gift from the Oticon Foundation of New Zealand as part of the Oticon Foundation 100 year celebration. This gift of \$705,000 was made up of a one-off payment of \$300,000 in 2003 which supported the establishment of the Audiology Clinic facilities in the School of Population Health and an annual donation over the following 9 years of \$45,000 to support the activities of the Oticon Foundation Hearing Education Centre (OFHEC). 2013 was the final year of funding.

The centre was established to:

- To support postgraduate education in audiology to ensure excellence in audiology professional training.
- To provide professional development programmes for the audiology and associated health professions
- To facilitate the transfer of evidence-based practice into the clinical speciality of audiology.
- To provide equipment and facilities for audiology training and professional development
- To promote community education in hearing and hearing loss
- To promote graduate research in clinical audiology.

Highlights of the OFHEC activities since its inception include:

1. Finances:

The OFHEC accounts are managed by the School of Medicine Foundation and accrue interest according to the share of the investment income. In addition to the annual donations provided by the Oticon Foundation as its gift commitment, the OFHEC management committee has run activities to meet its goals but also which have generated income, such as workshops and conferences. These have enabled the funds to grow and at the end of the gift period the OFHEC fund stands at approximately \$350,000, which will be available to support the centre in the future. This capital growth was a projected outcome of the centre proposal that was approved when the gift was made.

2. Activities

The OFHEC has run a number of successful annual activities designed to enhance the continuing education of audiology and associated health professions, as well as public education programmes. These have included:

- *Quarterly Hearing Research Seminars:* each year we have hosted early evening seminars which on a huge variety of interesting topics.

These have covered specialised fields of hearing science, research presentations from graduate students in audiology or speech sciences, or presentations from visiting scientists and clinicians. Often we have used these to showcase the outstanding research work that is being undertaken at the University of Auckland. Attendance varies with the topic (and the weather!) but we regularly have 50 people at these meetings.

- *Annual OFHEC Spring Symposium:* Soon after the establishment of the Centre we made the decision to run an annual symposium on a special topic. In 2013 we hosted our seventh symposium. These have been remarkably successful and have become a recognised part of the Audiology and Otolaryngology continuing education calendar. Generally we have selected interesting and sometimes provocative topics to encourage thought and stimulate debate around important issues to hearing impaired people and professions. These have included Otitis Media and its Prevention; Issues in the Prevention of Noise Induced Hearing Loss; Tinnitus and its Management; Maori Hearing Health; and the latest one which was on Global Hearing Health and Development of Hearing Services in Pacific Nations. Our 8th Symposium in 2014 will focus on the “Hearing Brain” and discuss auditory processing, listening and auditory processing disorders. Attendance has been excellent with 80-120 attendees.
- *Workshops:* We have held workshops on paediatric audiology, auditory processing disorders and diagnosis, real ear measures and infant hearing aid fitting. These have provided specialised professional development for the audiology profession.
- *Public Education:* We participate in the annual Brain Day exhibition through the University of Auckland, annually deliver a number of lectures to public and community groups, especially the Hearing Associations around the country. For six years we also attended the Field Days at Mystery Creek and provided hearing tests and public lectures on hearing loss to the visitors. Each year we would have undertaken about 400 hearing tests and consultations. We have also contributed to the General Practitioners conferences and continuing education workshops in Auckland, providing information and education on hearing loss and its management.

3. Commitment to the Master of Audiology programme at the University of Auckland:

The Centre has for most years supported a part-time Tutor (0.2-0.5FTE) in the Section of Audiology to provide support to the clinical teaching. We have also used the OFHEC funds to purchase equipment for teaching (an OAE system) or books and small items of equipment and software for Audiology research students.

4. The Future

The annual gifts from the Oticon Foundation ceased in 2013. With the prudent management and generous support from the foundation, the Centre will have a substantial capital base to continue meeting its goals beyond the gift period. We intend to continue with the Centre under the OFHEC banner and to expand its outreach activities and have discussed this with the Oticon Foundation. With some additional funding from income generated through department activities and which will be added to the OFHEC account, we are hoping to employ a community communications manager, part-time, for two years who will take the community outreach work of the centre to a new level. This will involve:

- Development of the OFHEC website
- Integration of the OFHEC brand as the outreach arm of the new Centre For Hearing and Hearing Disorders
- Promotion and management of the professional development programme of OFHEC
- Sourcing other funds and philanthropic support to expand the OFHEC operation

5. Summary

In summary the OFHEC has over the last ten years made progress relative to its goals as follows

- To support postgraduate education in audiology to ensure excellence in audiology professional training. *Annually supported tutors in the MAud programme, assisted with maintaining an up to date Audiology library*
- To provide professional development programmes for the audiology and associated health professions. *Annual workshops, seminars and a major Spring Symposium on contemporary audiology topics*
- To facilitate the transfer of evidence-based practice into the clinical speciality of audiology. *Come about by workshops on new technologies, symposia and seminars*
- To provide equipment and facilities for audiology training and professional development. *Provided equipment, and supported the establishment of the clinics for clinical teaching as well as for continuing education workshops for audiology professionals*
- To promote community education in hearing and hearing loss. *Staff and students present regularly to community groups, participate in open days and public meetings on hearing and the brain, participate in governance and management of community groups*
- To promote graduate research in clinical audiology. *Supported facilities and equipment for audiological research by MAud students*

The generosity of the Oticon Foundation has facilitated the establishment of an enduring centre for continuing and public education in hearing and hearing disorders. It has also added immense value to audiology training at the University of Auckland: it is fair to say that without the support of the foundation it would have been difficult to maintain the quality of Audiology education. It has enabled the audiology programme to attain the highest international standards by providing support for equipment, staff and resources, beyond what is available through university funding. We are extremely grateful to the Oticon Foundation for its generosity, foresight and continued commitment to the Centre and education of future hearing professionals and the public. We hope that its association with the University and the Centre will continue.

Peter Thorne

29.4.14