

26 June 2002

MEDIA RELEASE

Newborn babies focus of Oticon Foundation 2002 grants

Babies need to have their hearing tested at birth if vital brain development is to occur, according to Oriole Wilson, co-ordinator of the Newborn Hearing Screening Consultative Group.

The neural pathways that process sound need to be stimulated by speech in the first few months of a baby's life, otherwise language skills will never develop to the child's full potential. Newborn detection of hearing loss is critical to early intervention and better social, educational and health outcomes.

In New Zealand, the age of detection of hearing loss is steadily increasing and is now 39 months. The long term impacts of this delay in hearing testing New Zealand children means they are not likely to 'catch-up' with their peers, leading to increased demand on costly state-funded support services in health and education. Around three in every 1,000 babies has a hearing loss detectable at birth.

To support the campaign for newborn screening, the Oticon Foundation has provided its largest grant this year to sponsor the visit of Professor David Luterman, Director of a family-centred early intervention programme in Boston, US. A recognised world expert in newborn hearing screening programmes, Professor Luterman will speak with parents, service providers and hearing care professionals during July 2002. This includes an educational seminar for 34 nationwide child health professional groups, focused on intervention and support services for newborns and their families; and intensive training workshops for audiologists and Ministry of Education Advisors on Deaf Children.

There is unanimous agreement amongst all health education and support agencies who work with the Deaf and hearing impaired, that early detection of hearing loss is essential. This is an issue which brings together support agencies and the National Foundation for the Deaf is also contributing to the newborn hearing screening initiative and Professor Luterman's seminar.

The Oticon Foundation has provided \$92,000 this year for a range of projects including literacy and classroom listening environments, supporting specialist training, and furthering research into hearing impaired and Deaf people.

Oticon Foundation in New Zealand
P O Box 9128
Te Aro
Wellington
NEW ZEALAND

Tel.: +64 4 473 3330
Fax: +64 4 473 4440

the oticon foundation

Oticon Foundation Secretary, Ms Karen Pullar said that leading hearing aid manufacturer, Oticon NZ, established the Oticon Foundation in 1976 to increase awareness and knowledge about hearing loss. "With over 400,000 New Zealanders suffering from hearing loss, the Oticon Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for hearing impaired people and their families," says Ms Pullar.

"Oticon NZ does business in a way that positively contributes to society," said Ms Pullar. "We are delighted that other New Zealanders can benefit from Oticon NZ's success."

Oriole Wilson, Clinical Director National Audiology Centre is able to do a live demonstration of the newborn screening technique to interested media from Monday 1 July at :

**ADHB Audiology Services, National Audiology Centre, 98 Remuera Rd, Auckland
Phone: (09) 520 4009, Fax: (09) 522 1622 Email: oriolew@adhb.govt.nz**

Professor Luterman is available for media interviews from Thursday 4 July – Tuesday 23 July 2002.

Itinerary:

3 July	Arrive Auckland
4 July	Ascot Motel, Parnell Road, 09 376 5989
5 July	Seminar – Newborn Hearing Screening Consultative Group
8-9 July	Workshops – families, audiologists, Ministry of Education Advisors on Deaf Children
11 July	Arrive Christchurch
12 July	Seminar – Newborn Hearing Screening Consultative Group
15-16 July	Workshops – families, audiologists, Ministry of Education Advisors on Deaf Children
22 July	Arrive Wellington
24 July	Depart NZ

For further information please contact:

Karen Pullar

Oticon Foundation in NZ

0800 OTICON

0800 684 266

04 473 3330

021 647 330

info@oticon.org.nz

PROFILE: PROFESSOR DAVID LUTERMAN

Professor Luterman has dedicated over 40 years of his professional life to working with families of children who have been diagnosed with hearing loss. He is Professor Emeritus of Emerson College in Boston and director of a family centred early intervention program. He has advised both the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Newborn Hearing Screening programmes on intervention and support services. He is a recognised world expert in his field.

Professor Luterman has written 7 books including When Your Child is Deaf, and numerous articles. He presents at workshops throughout the world, and was last in New Zealand in 1998.

Professor Luterman is in New Zealand as a Keynote Speaker at the National Audiology Centre Seminar on the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme being developed in NZ. He will address the very important issue of what type of Intervention and Support Services are needed for Newborn Hearing Screening.

Seminar organisation sponsored by National Foundation for the Deaf Inc.

Professor David Luterman's visit sponsored by the Oticon Foundation in NZ.