

Media release – Friday 3 July 2015
The Oticon Foundation in New Zealand

Hearing loss impacts healthy aging

Leading research points to hearing loss as a major factor in elderly people's declining physical and intellectual capabilities, says Karen Pullar, Secretary of the Oticon Foundation.

This keynote topic will be presented by Dr Sara Mamo at the NZ Audiological Society's annual conference being held in Auckland from 2 to 4 July. The Oticon Foundation is pleased to have provided a grant to bring Dr Mamo, a postdoctoral fellow at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, to the conference.

'Dr Mamo's research has shown that the area of the brain dedicated to hearing is reorganised in the early stages of hearing loss and if left untreated can lead to a decline in brain functioning. However, if hearing loss is treated early it may lessen the impact of that process,' says Ms Pullar.

Dr Mamo will also speak about her research on community-based initiatives to make hearing care services affordable and accessible. Less than 25% of adults affected by age-related hearing loss receive any hearing care, and public health approaches may be the way to reach more and enhance healthy aging.

The Foundation also supported the MG Martin Trust to bring Professor Mary-Pat Moeller to the conference. Professor Moeller, from Boys Town National Research Hospital, Omaha, is an international expert on hearing loss and children and will speak on early intervention, promoting positive outcomes for children and families, and the longitudinal outcomes of children who wear hearing aids. Professor Moeller has published and lectured internationally on the early development in children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

'The Oticon Foundation supports the ongoing professional development of New Zealand audiologists and is pleased to have been able to support both Dr Mamo and Professor Moeller to attend the conference, which provides New Zealand professionals with an opportunity to learn and increase their awareness of current research,' Ms Pullar says.



Sara Mamo is a postdoctoral fellow at Johns Hopkins University in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head/Neck Surgery. She completed her clinical and research training in audiology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her research interests include the aging auditory system and speech perception deficits among older adults. Currently, her research projects focus on developing alternative interventions that improve the affordability and accessibility of hearing health care.



Mary-Pat Moeller is the Director of the Centre for Childhood Deafness at Boys Town National Research Hospital (BTNRH) in Omaha, NE. Her research interests include theory of mind development, and speech and language outcomes including early word learning in children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Dr. Moeller is currently a co-principal investigator of a federally-funded, longitudinal study of the outcomes of children who are hard of hearing. She also directed a team at BTNRH to develop a website for families whose infants are referred from newborn hearing screening (www.babyhearing.org; www.audiciondelbebe.com). Dr. Moeller is a member of the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing. She led an International Consensus Conference on best practices in family-centered early intervention in Bad Ischl, Austria in 2012 and continues that collaboration today. Dr. Moeller received the Honors of the American Speech-Language-hearing Association in 2013.

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