



INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF DEAF PEOPLE

With the theme of 'Building Inclusive Communities for All', International Week of the Deaf 2022, celebrated from September 19-25, 2022, aims to acknowledge the existence and contribution of the deaf community across the world. Lending an ear to these aphonic winds, The Global Times presents to you this special edition that highlights the challenges faced by them, and their incredible resilience to overcome the same.

AMITe poll

Do you think the UK government's new anti-inflation budget will help the country in fighting off the looming recession?

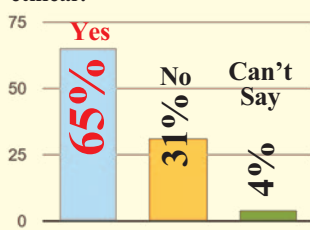
- a) Yes
b) No
c) Can't say

To vote, log on to www.theglobaltimes.in

POLL RESULT

for GT issue September 19, 2022

Do you think moonlighting, the practice of taking up a second job during or after the regular work hours, is ethical?



Results as on October 08, 2022

Coming Next

Wildlife Special

Deafening silence

Audiologist Neevita Narayan Pens Down An Epistle For The Deaf



Mother puts the hearing aid in her one-year-old son's ear

Mom (with hope): Beta!

Dumbstruck, the son raises his head with eyes almost bulging out in surprise, and gazes in the direction of the voice

Mom (wailing tears of ecstasy): Oh, beta!

Dear reader,

The above scenario is just one in 430 million (nearly 5% of the world's population) who gets the privilege of having such a happy ending. But this does not mean that everyone does. As an audiologist and speech therapist, I often witness tears that emanate from the happiness of finally being able to hear, and also those that stem from the frustration of being unable to do so.

Perhaps what hurts more is the knowledge that hearing is the only sensory disability that can be treated, or could have been well avoided in the first place. I have seen things go down south, things that could have well gone uphill. In one such instance, a lady working with WHO over-

looked our diagnosis of her three months old child and finally got her child a cochlear implant when she turned two. As a result, the child lost the critical period of language development, all because of the sheer negligence of parents and other family members. So, yes, those are the moments of exasperation that every single audiologist has to go through.

And then there are days when you witness joy in its purest form as you watch a little kid, or an adult, regain his sense of hearing. I give into tears yet again, albeit this time tears of joy. And when you see these patients take on life full throttle, carving a name for themselves, it brings gratification beyond words. From cracking national level exams to becoming doctors, engineers, IAS officers, and whatnot, the hearing-impaired under my care have done it all. Mahrukh, one of my patients has been aiming to become a gynecologist. She is currently doing her post graduation from the prestigious Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi, this girl has raised the bar for many. For being a medical practitioner is, in itself, back-breaking, but for someone who struggles to hear to muster up the courage to hold a stethoscope and engage in a career as people-oriented as it gets, is nothing short of remarkable.

However, to say that the path thus far was easy would be highly unfair to both, those who have suffered and overcame, and those who have aided them every step of the way. For hearing loss was once (and is still, "but

hush," they say) considered a silent taboo. As One-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, it is usually swept under the rug as a disability that's too shameful to be acknowledged or addressed, let alone treated. Thus, it's barely surprising that only 17% of people in need of hearing aids ever make use of them. Even those who do, they prefer to install the smallest hearing aid, a discreet processor as we call it, that isn't easily visible to the naked eye. Being a professional in the field, I have been striving and continue to give the issue the importance it deserves, whether it is talking about tackling the stigmas associated with the problem, or working towards screening of neonates for hearing as part of their routine full body check-ups. Children are in a critical period from birth until they turn two. This is the time when they actually make use of their senses to learn and grow, and as such should be the time, we, as health professionals, should lay utmost emphasis on.

No, hearing loss cannot be reversed or be 100% treated at any point in time; no, "bada hoga toh dekh lege" is not the right approach – treat it today and while you still can, or doom your child to a life with no sound and minimal to no speech.

Would a medical professional want that? I think not! Would a family want that for one of their own? Definitely not! So, if you are a parent/guardian, I urge you to be on the lookout and see if your child isn't responding to your voice, or is asking

for a lot of repetitions; see if he is displaying a complete lack of attention, or isn't performing too well in school. And if you are an adult, spare yourself the trouble of becoming a potential hearing loss sufferer by, say, not neglecting the times you raise the volume of the TV, or are unintentionally missing out on or failing to follow a conversation. Besides, do not, for the sake of God, be of the view that "kaam chal jayega" if you skip getting the treatment, because there's absolutely nothing you can do later. Nothing at all!

Don't feel the extra pressure to prove your mettle as "normal"; do not give in to any depressive tendencies having "failed" at that; and lastly, don't let the society force you to live an isolated existence, because you definitely deserve to have it all and more. To help you attain the same, I am here; just know that you and I, we are enough!

At the end of the day, all the deaf seek is good hearing and equality of treatment and inclusion; and all I seek is the power and strength to help them in their critical journey to pull it off. I would never want to be the one to say "sorry, we cannot help your case"; I want to be the one to say "we can do this for you and this is how!" 🇮🇳

*Present at your service,
today and forever*

Neevita Narayan

Founder, SpHear Speech and Hearing Clinics Pvt Ltd. & I Can Hear Foundation