



# Sharpen Your Skills

**I**n grad school many moons ago, I remember our class being chastised by a faculty member for not attending a lecture by a visiting researcher. Was it our lack of interest in advances in auditory physiology or just plain old apathy? At the time, I believe our focus was limited to getting through class work and clinic—the bigger picture just wasn't in our grad student tunnel vision.

A few years later I found myself thinking it would be great to be able to go back to "school" after some real world experience. Now that I better recognized my areas of interest as well as my deficiencies, I thought I would like to learn, purely for the sake of learning, and share experiences with colleagues (remember, this was still before the Internet!).

Fast forward to the present: educational opportunities abound! We have distance AuD programs, the AudiologyNOW! convention, state association meetings, plus affiliated conferences, all offering many chances for learning, collegiality and face-to-face networking. We also have access to numerous online continuing education (CE) offerings.

## New Learning Opportunities

To those of you who spend most of your time working with adult patients and only a few hours a week working with children and their families, I invite you to step out of your comfort zone and explore some new opportunities to grow your knowledge of pediatric audiology. This year the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell, [www.agbell.org](http://www.agbell.org)) holds its biennial convention in Milwaukee, June 27-30. At the last AG Bell convention in 2006, 60 percent of attendees were professionals. The convention offers a wide variety of educational sessions including a research symposium on new mechanisms in auditory discrimination and speech in deafness.

It's also a great opportunity to update your knowledge on cochlear implants. This meeting is a relaxed, family-friendly event filled with great people.

And don't forget about your state AG Bell meetings—not only can you earn CEUs, you might share your knowledge as a presenter or moderator, too!

The National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM, [www.infantheating.org](http://www.infantheating.org)), also known as the National Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Resource Center, held its annual meeting this year in New Orleans. If you've ever wanted to know more about newborn hearing screening and early intervention programs, this yearly conference—and the NCHAM Web site—has it all. NCHAM also offers multi-day workshops on diagnostics and amplification for infants and toddlers. This is where I would begin to obtain in-depth, hands-on experience for performing diagnostic ABR and OAEs of infants.

## Lifelong Learning

If you are already involved with the evaluation and remediation of infants and children with hearing loss, you can further your knowledge and professional standing through specialty certification from the American Board of Audiology™ (ABA, [www.americanboardofaudiology.org](http://www.americanboardofaudiology.org)). The ABA is committed to the principle that audiologists should continuously sharpen their skills and remain on the cutting edge of advances in the field. In fact, the motto of this voluntary credentialing organization is "Lifelong Learning: A Quest for Excellence."

With newborn hearing screening pioneer Marion Downs, DHS, DSc (Hon), MA, serving as the honorary chair, the ABA is currently developing a Pediatric Audiology Specialty Certification. In ABA surveys conducted in the professional audiology community, the majority of survey respondents believed that pediatric audiology has progressed to the point that it should be considered a specialty area. With the advent of widespread newborn hearing screening, ABA believes there is a need for a specialty certification to manage the many infants identified with hearing impairment, not only in the early stages but also as these children grow up and utilize new technology.

With so many opportunities to sharpen our child-friendly audiology skills, it's easy to see the bigger picture and recommit ourselves to the joy of learning. 💰

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