The Marketing Scene

Marketing Audiology to Physicians

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Members of the Academy’s Marketing Committee manned Academy booths at the fall meetings of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) annual convention in San Francisco, and at the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) meeting in Orlando, FL. Although the Academy has been a regular exhibitor at the AAFP Convention, this was the first time the Academy exhibited at the AAP meeting. Realizing the importance in raising the visibility of audiology to potential referring physicians, having a strong presence at their annual national conventions provides us with opportunities to convey our expertise to many physicians in one location. We are well aware that physicians typically fail to recognize the contributions of audiologists to their patients, and we want them to understand that the American Academy of Audiology is available to help them in many ways. Our exhibiting experiences over the past few years have shown us that these outings provide a pleasant, friendly environment in which to clearly and succinctly describe to physicians the unique qualifications of audiologists and the role we play in diagnosing and treating hearing and balance problems.

Questions at the exhibit booth from pediatricians attending the AAP meeting focused on three main areas of interest: (a) the dangers of noise exposure for children and suggestions as how to protect hearing; (b) information and statistics about newborn infant hearing screening and intervention programs; and (3) suggestions for effective means of screening children’s hearing in the pediatric office. In general, pediatricians seemed surprised that exposure to noise from everyday recreational activities, appliances and toys was potentially hazardous to children. Convention attendees revealed that their own adolescent children played in school bands or attended noisy events such as drag racing competitions and rock concerts. They welcomed our information on the dangers of noise and the benefits of using hearing protection. As a convention booth handout, the ear protection devices provided by our Academy were a hot item and disappeared quickly as word spread about their availability at our booth.

Many pediatricians and pediatric nurses were well aware of universal newborn hearing screening (UNHS), i.e. “We’re already doing that.” They were curious, however, to compare their programs with that of other hospitals or states. Some attendees were seeking specific information about UNHS such as the numbers of children who should be identified as deaf or hearing-impaired as well as the numbers of children with significant hearing loss who might be missed. These questions made it clear that audiologists have an opportunity to market our skills and knowledge to physicians by providing information on the efficacy of UNHS programs.

The AAFP meeting presented a wonderful opportunity to discuss the prevalence of hearing loss and balance disorders to more than 20,000 physicians in attendance. Giveaways at the Academy booth included Putty Buddy earmolds, Hearpens, High Fidelity Earplugs, and booklets on dizziness.* The Academy also provided tote bags, foam earplugs, educational brochures and writing pens as handouts for the throngs of convention-goers.

Practitioners at both meetings had questions regarding effective in-office hearing screening methods and procedures. Many wanted specific recommendations on available equipment for use in screening the hearing of their patients, but readily admitted that they did not understand the various techniques for screening hearing and which measures provide the most accurate information. Simplicity, effectiveness, and ease of use were primary concerns of the physicians already pressed for time during their patient examinations. Some physicians with hearing loss expressed interest in learning more about assistive devices and several were disappointed that they were unable to get their hearing screened by an audiologist at the Academy booth.

It is clear that marketing our services to physicians is a long-term project. All audiologists have an ongoing responsibility to provide information regarding audiology as a profession, the help that can be obtained through our Academy, and the hearing services that we provide to all group of patients. Marketing efforts that effectively address these concerns may facilitate working with our medical colleagues in family practice and pediatrics to provide optimal care for patients with hearing loss.

* Appreciation is extended to Starkey Laboratories, Micromedical Technologies, Etymotic Research, Inc. and Jaco Enterprises.

Henry Ford Medical Group, Division of Audiology, in southeast Michigan is looking for a pediatric audiologist. Medical Group members enjoy affordable family medical and dental insurance and paid malpractice and long-term disability. Audiologists work at one of five sites, including Detroit, Westland, Dearborn, West Bloomfield and Sterling Heights.

Minimally qualified applicants are graduates of an accredited university with a Masters or Doctorate degree in Audiology and eligible for Michigan licensure.

To learn more about this opportunity, visit our website at: www.henryford.com/physician, call Ann Korinek at (313) 874-4677, email: akorinek@hfhs.org or fax to: (313) 874-4677. (AA/EEE)