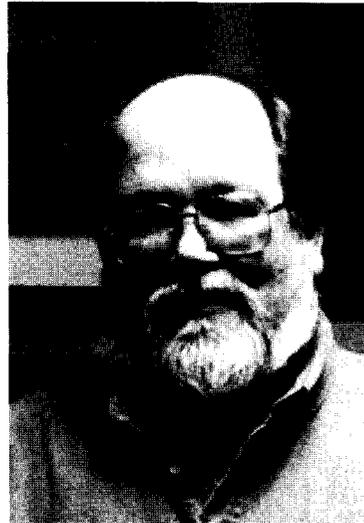


Introduction by Guest Editor



Speech has been used to assess hearing function for several centuries. In the past 100 years, there has been a direct relation between advances in electronic instrumentation and the methods used to present speech materials. The following chronology illustrates this relation (Wilson, 1993): (1) shortly after Edison invented the phonograph in 1877, Lichtwitz developed a recording of speech materials; (2) Jones and Knudsen constructed an audiometer in 1924 that contained an electronic circuit used to vary the speech presentation level; (3) in the early 1950s, Hirsh and his colleagues, in association with Technisonic Studios, produced audio (vinyl) records of the CID W-1 and W-22 word lists that were used widely in audiology clinics for 20 years; (4) in the 1970s, audio tape, initially reel-to-reel then cassette, became the preferred recording medium; and (5) in the mid-1980s, the advent of the digital audio compact disc technology altered and improved the medium on which speech audiometric materials were stored. An initial VA compact disc, *Speech Recognition and Identification Materials, Disc 1.1*, was developed in 1991 by the Department of Veterans Affairs for use in the nationwide auditory compensation and pension evaluation program. This initial compact disc contained a variety of speech audiometric materials for use in evaluating the routine speech recognition (identification) abilities of patients. Subsequently, in 1992, a second VA compact disc that included several dichotic tasks, tone pattern (frequency and duration) recognition tasks, and a variety of distorted speech tasks was developed by the VA Medical Centers in Long Beach and West Los Angeles (Doug Noffsinger) in conjunction with the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (Frank Musiek). This second compact disc, *Tonal and Speech Materials for Auditory Perceptual Assessment, Disc 1*, is the topic of this special issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Audiology*.

The *Tonal and Speech Materials for Auditory Perceptual Assessment, Disc 1* compact audio disc was produced to provide a collection of high-quality auditory materials for use in assessing auditory perceptual (central) abilities (Wilson, 1993). The eight papers contained in this issue provide the development and preparation background of the various speech and tonal materials included on the compact disc. Additionally, each paper contains normative data from 120 young adults with normal hearing. The normative data are intended to provide only performance benchmarks for the various auditory listening tasks. Definitive interpretations of the data from the various speech and tonal materials await investigations on appropriate populations of children and adults with documented auditory disorders.

I want to acknowledge the many individuals who made this project possible. First, a telephone call from Jerry Popelka initiated the interaction among the principals (FEM, DN, and RHW). Second, and perhaps most important, Ms. Jo Ann Marshall, Administrative Officer, Medical Research Service at the VA Medical Center, Long Beach, provided the creative financing for the production. Third, the Rehabilitation Research and Development Service, Department of Veterans Affairs funded the production of the disc. Fourth, materials for the disc were provided through the generosity of the following: (1) G. Donald Causey (Northwestern University Auditory Test No. 6); (2) Bob Brose (Technisonic Studios, Inc., St. Louis, Charles E. Harrison, producer of the CID W-1 lists); (3) Kresge Hearing Research Laboratory of the South, New Orleans (dichotic CVs); and (4) James Jerger (Dichotic Sentence Identification). Finally, the following individuals/institutions made major contributions with data collection from the 120 young adults with normal hearing: (1) Mary Jo Brown and Terry Wiley, University of Wisconsin, Madison; (2) John Nelson and Vern Larson, VA Medical Center, Augusta; (3) Michele Chirdon and Catherine Palmer, University of Pittsburgh; (4) Dawn Nelson and Jay Hall, III, Vanderbilt University; (5) Melissa Jaffe, Crystal Tipton, and Saralyn Gold, East Tennessee State University and VA Medical Center, Mountain Home; (6) Jane Baran, University of Massachusetts; and (7) Teresa Dooley-Doyle, University of New Hampshire. The contributions of these individuals are greatly appreciated.

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