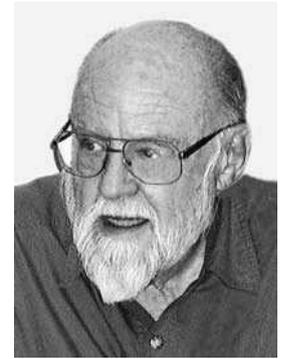


# Editorial

## Research and the Au.D.

DOI: 10.3766/jaaa.19.7.1



I get quite a few e-mails that view with alarm the withering away of our research base. As more and more students choose the Au.D. track over the traditional Ph.D. path, goes the argument, there will be no one left to do the research, without which the field cannot progress in this highly technical age. That may, indeed, be the case in many of the existing Au.D. training programs, but there is at least one program in which research training remains viable.

In this issue of *JAAA*, authors Emily Klemp and Sumitrajit Dhar, of the Au.D. program at Northwestern University, present the result of a research project carried out by Au.D. student Klemp under Dr. Dhar's mentorship. The study is concerned with the use of directional microphones in open-canal fittings. They ask whether the positive directionality effect, demonstrated so often in occluded canal fittings, is lost when the canal is opened to interfering sounds from all directions. In 16 relatively elderly individuals with bilateral high-frequency sensorineural losses, but without previous hearing aid experience, they compared HINT scores under five conditions: (1) unaided, (2) omnidirectional mic (OMNI), (3) digital noise

reduction (DNR), (4) directional microphone (DIR), and (5) DNR and DIR (BOTH). Two results were noteworthy. First, relative to the OMNI condition, HINT scores showed significant benefit for the DIR and BOTH conditions. In other words, the benefit of directionality was not lost due to the open-canal fitting. Second, performance in the OMNI condition was actually poorer than in the unaided condition, a finding consonant with the frequent comments of elderly people with high-frequency losses that they seem to do better without the hearing aid.

I commend this paper to all who fear a decline in research productivity in the years ahead. Clearly, it takes much more than one project to bring students to even a minimum level of proficiency in research: immersion in a serious research training program is a necessity. The faculty at Northwestern appear to have mounted such an Au.D. program, one in which training in research is alive and well.

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