



Digital technology...has certainly arrived at the point where it is now the standard within the hearing industry. Nationally, in the fourth quarter of 2004, over 86% of the hearing aids fit were of the digital persuasion. Not surprisingly, we're finding that many of the analog circuits we used to rely on have now been discontinued.

The good news...is that we don't miss them. We're having great success with the 12 band digital circuits we're currently using for in-the-ear applications. This circuit has excellent feedback rejection capability and it's a real plus that we can add a second program for noisy environments. Even with CIC hearing aids, we can add up to four separate programs. We're currently developing a line of fully digital, programmable, Behind-The-Ear hearing aids using this technology.

Open ear...technology uses an ear mold with a very large vent to prevent the 'plugged sensation' that can accompany some in-the-ear fittings. We worked with this technology many years ago, but due to the high incidence of feedback, we generally had only fair success and then only with very mild hearing losses. The vast improvements in feedback reduction technology now make these types of fittings viable for some patients. Additionally, some of these open ear hearing aids are incredibly tiny and thus *virtually unnoticeable*. The 'open ear' configuration helps preserve the sound localization ability often compromised by anything larger than a CIC type hearing aid. *Ask Candy to show you an example of the latest offering from Starkey.*

We've fit...a couple pairs of open ear BTE's recently. The '*Resound Air*' is a tiny, fully digital, instant fit, Behind-The-Ear hearing aid designed for the patient who has a relatively mild or precipitous high frequency hearing loss. Yes, 'instant fit' means that we test the patient, program and fit the hearing aids all in one appointment. These are great for someone who has never tried hearing aids and wonders how they might adapt to amplification.

Implanted...hearing aids have also been getting some press lately. In some applications, an oscillator, or 'vibrating ossicular prosthesis' is surgically attached to one of the bones in the middle ear, the wires surgically implanted parallel to the ear canal terminating at an attachment point under the skin behind the ear. After eight weeks healing time, an external audio processor (the size of a large hearing aid) is programmed for the patient's hearing loss and magnetically coupled to the attachment point. So, rather than wearing a hearing aid in your ear, this device is attached to the side of your head, concealed (hopefully), by your hair. Touted as a solution for the "plugged ear" feeling of wearing a hearing aid, with all respect, it seems a little like having the nurse cut your arm off to draw blood, because you don't want her to poke you with a needle. For more info: visit www.vibrant-medel.com.

Despite...the advancements in hearing aid technology, when it comes to hearing aid problems we battle the same old foes; wax, moisture and mechanical damage. Our technicians work under a ten power microscope and use a specially designed vacuum to clean your hearing aids. This thorough cleaning usually restores the hearing aid to like new performance. Please do take advantage of this free service. No appointment is necessary and it takes only a few minutes...

Next time... we'll talk about sudden hearing loss and the high cost of hearing aid repairs (as much as \$350.00 in some places). We still charge \$125.00 for a full repair, and often only \$40 or \$50.00 to replace a microphone or receiver...until then, Best Regards from Janet, Jim, John and Candy