

SPRING 2006

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 CNI Cochlear Kids Camp
- 3 Reflecting the Light Service
- 3 Medical Advisory Update
- 4 CNI Golf Tournament
- 5 Telemedicine Network
- 7 Elephant Rock Cycling Festival
- 8 Hope Award Celebration

CNI

701 E. HAMPDEN AVE.
SUITE 330
ENGLEWOOD, CO 80113
(303) 788-4010
(303) 788-5469 FAX
WWW.THECNI.ORG

It's a *NOISY* World Out There!

David C. Kelsall, MD
CNI Center for Hearing

There is a health crisis in the works, yet very few people are aware of it. We are living in a noisy world, and it is taking its irreversible toll on our sense of hearing. As we turn up the music, use leaf blowers, attend concerts, and listen to our iPods, the damage is invisible. Noise-induced hearing loss is the most common hidden disability in America today and it develops so slowly and insidiously that we don't recognize it until it is too late. The amount of environmental noise has doubled each decade for the past 20 years and estimates are for continued increase in the "noisy world syndrome". Hearing damage occurs when loud sounds destroy the sensitive tiny hair cells of the inner ear. Once 20-30% of these cells disappear, hearing loss becomes noticeable.

More than 28 million Americans currently have some degree of hearing loss, according to the National Institute on Deafness, and as the current population ages, the number is expected to climb as high as 78 million over the next 25 years. Baby boomers are developing hearing loss in our 40's and 50's rather than 60's and 70's as our parents did. Some causes of hearing loss are unavoidable, but noise-induced loss can clearly be prevented. There are 5.2 million children in US between the age of 6 and 19 who already have some degree of noise-induced hearing loss, and this number is rising daily. In a recent survey of young adults, 66% reported having tinnitus (ringing in the ears) or hearing loss, but only 8% were "concerned about hearing problems".

Noise-induced hearing loss can result from an acute blast of sound, but the much more

common cause is hours of exposure each day. At the center of the current crisis is the Apple iPod. Latest estimates show there are 42 million iPods on the market. One only has to watch the high schoolers getting off the bus in the morning to realize the huge impact this technology is having on the youth of today. The iPod has been blamed for noise-induced hearing loss for several reasons. First is the fact that the iPod can play music at 120 decibels, and after just 7.5 minutes at this level, damage can occur. The iPod digital technology and ear buds are of such high quality that even at high volume, there isn't the distortion that in the past would cause us to turn the music back down. Because the ear

"At the center of the current crisis is the Apple iPod."

buds don't occlude the canal, the background noise has to be overridden by the iPod volume essentially adding to the already noisy world we live in.

Numerous musicians are now discussing their noise-induced hearing loss in an effort to educate young people about the dangers. In 1989, Pete Townsend admitted he had sustained very severe hearing loss as a result of years of loud music exposure. The list of others now discussing their hearing loss includes Bruce Springsteen, Neil Young, Ted Nugent, Mick Fleetwood, Sting, and Jeff Beck. Education is the key to prevention and numerous coordinated efforts are underway to educate the youth of today so they don't become the deaf of tomorrow.

