

Collaborative Marketing Campaign rallies industry in 'Year of Patient Satisfaction.'

# Patient satisfaction: Whose responsibility is it?

SERGEI KOCHKIN AND CAROL CLIFFORD

**T**iming is everything, it's been said. That's why the Collaborative Marketing Campaign (CMC) — the industry-wide campaign designed to change the public's perception of hearing loss and hearing aids — could not have been started at a better time for the hearing health care industry.

Why is this collaborative marketing effort so vital to the industry's livelihood? Consider, for instance, the following issues that have been identified as critical, long-term problems plaguing the hearing health care industry:

- Less than one out of four Americans with a self-reported hearing difficulty uses hearing instruments.

- Only 58% of patients are said to be satisfied with their hearing instruments (MarkeTrak statistics). Only seven out of 10 consumers believe that hearing instruments improve their hearing. Only half of consumers believe that hearing instruments are a satisfactory value.

- Adults under the age of 55 with a correctable hearing loss do not seek out hearing instruments as the solution to their problem due to the stigma of hearing loss and the current market position of hearing instruments (seen mostly as "elderly deaf people").

- Only 18% of consumers report receiving a hearing screening during their last physician exam. It is estimated that less than one out of five physicians is involved in hearing screening in America.

- Many who perceive they have a hearing loss do not know where they should go to seek a solution.

- There have been limited strategic initiatives to grow the market for hearing instruments in our industry.

Surprisingly, the CMC was not just started last year, when the hearing aid industry was under fire from all directions. The CMC concept actually emerged two years ago during the Academy of Dispensing Audiologists' long-range planning

*Both authors serve on the National Steering Committee of the Collaborative Marketing Campaign (CMC). Clifford is chairperson. Readers can contact CMC at 708-490-1670.*

## What is the Collaborative Marketing Campaign?

**T**he Collaborative Marketing Campaign (CMC) is an industry-wide effort, designed to bring combined resources together to increase the public awareness of hearing loss, promote better hearing and to grow the overall hearing instrument market.

meeting, a time when the problems facing the hearing industry remained long-standing and unchanged. For instance, hearing instrument penetration was at approximately 22% (MarkeTrak, Feb. 1991; Hearing Industries Assn., 1985), and hearing instruments were poorly positioned in the marketplace with 65% of hearing instrument owners retired or unemployed.

It appeared to many people that the structural problems in our industry were preventing us from reaching an untapped population needing our services and products. How fortuitous that now in 1994 when the industry is under the watchful eyes of the FDA, FTC, AARP

and the press that we already have the CMC in place, plans made and some, like this year's Year of Patient Satisfaction already started.

The goal of the CMC was to bring together the hearing instrument community — including manufacturers and professional associations — to discuss opportunities to grow the overall hearing instrument market and promote increased awareness of hearing loss and better hearing.

Overall, the CMC decided that for any strategy to be successful, it is necessary for the effort to be *fully collaborative* (that is, all manufacturers and associations with a stake in the future of the hearing health care industry would be invited to participate); *not dependent* on funding from manufacturers; and *focused* on the larger issues faced externally, rather than on working out differences to manage the program internally.

Four strategies/campaigns were agreed upon:

1. **Combat the stigma that presently exists for those who wear hearing instruments.**

2. **Establish more realistic expectations and usage among current patients, increase wearer satisfaction and encourage positive word-of-mouth advertising for our industry's services.**

3. **Teach dispensers to do a better job of understanding patient needs, solving problems, performing follow-up and setting realistic expectations.**

4. **Educate physicians to perform hearing screening and refer patients to qualified dispensers.**

## 'Steering' toward growth

**B**uilding on the foundation of work established in the collaborative sessions and setting a realistic plan of attack, the CMC National Steering Committee's views and vision for improving the hearing health care industry are vital to the long-term growth of our industry. Members of the committee include:

Steve Armstrong, Gennum  
Lucille Beck, AAA  
Tom Begley, Rayovac  
Carol Clifford, Committee Chairperson  
Jack Giroux, ReSound  
Herb Gorlin, IHS  
Peter Hahn, Oticon  
Maureen Hanley, AAO-HNS  
Jerry Johnson, Unitron  
Carol Killingsworth, Beltone  
Sergei Kochkin, Knowles/BHI  
Laura Michaud, Beltone  
Thomas Smith, ASHA  
Susan Whichard, ADA  
John Zei, Siemens

## Lending a helping hand

Guiding the progress of the CMC through the past two years has been the National Steering Committee (see sidebar for background). The National Steering Committee, which encourages the input of other key industry stake holders such as AARP, SHHH and HIA, has outlined both short- and long-term objectives.

Of the goals established in the collaborative conferences, the most aggressive was the development of a high profile advertising/communications campaign to combat


## Patient satisfaction

### Supporters of the CMC

Financial support for the collaborative conferences, as well as the ongoing CMC campaign, has truly been a collaborative effort throughout the industry. Dispensers have worked cooperatively with manufacturers to donate funds to the CMC through its hearing aid dispensing program. Additionally, associations, hearing health care cooperations, manufacturers and audiologists have all donated funds directly to the campaign. Supporters include:

|            |                             |                         |
|------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| AAA        | ADA                         | Argosy                  |
| ASHA       | AudioScience                | Bausch & Lomb           |
| Beltone    | General Hearing Instruments | Gennum Corp.            |
| GN Danavox | Electone                    | Hearing Health Services |
| IHS        | Knowles Electronics         | Oticon                  |
| Otosonic   | Phillips                    | Phonak                  |
| Qualitone  | ReSound                     | Rexton                  |
| Siemens    | Starkey                     | Unitron                 |

the stigma of hearing instruments and to promote the importance of hearing for a productive and higher quality of life. The barrier to be overcome: less than one in



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four hearing-impaired individuals use hearing instruments.

Initial estimates for funding such a program are \$7-10 million annually over a five-to-10-year period. After assessing the possibilities of the industry funding such an effort independently, the steering committee concluded that the best opportunity for success would result from a partnership established with foundations, corporations and/or other associations who share the industry's concerns about better hearing contributing to a better quality of life. The committee is currently investigating funding opportunities through the possible services of a consultant who specializes in conducting grant searches. In order to accomplish this long-term goal for an industry-wide anti-stigma program, the process must be divided into a series of smaller, short-term targets — the primary goal being a focus on patient satisfaction.

As stated earlier, overall satisfaction with hearing instruments was measured by MarkeTrak at only 58%. The collaborative short-term effort has, therefore, targeted 1994 as the Year of Patient Satisfaction. While it is clearly recognized that the low satisfaction rating received may be due to problems in all areas of the hearing health care industry, the CMC believed that beginning at the grassroots level, with the dispensers on the frontline, was the most effective way to initiate an industry-wide change.

#### Taking to the road

The first collaboration of its kind, this yearlong campaign is designed in a multi-tract format to give all dispensers the opportunity to enhance patient satisfaction in their own practices. Held at various conventions and meetings throughout the year, the objectives of this campaign include:

- Examining how to do such a superior job with consumers seeking our services that they become advocates for hearing care.

- Focusing on what the important is-

ssues are to the patient and the relative importance of those issues.

- Providing tools and knowledge attendees can put into action in today's world to improve patient satisfaction.

- Providing opportunity for interaction between the industry, dispensers and consumers to enhance communications and understanding.

CMC co-sponsored sessions were already held at the ADA and ASHA annual meetings last fall. Sessions planned for this year include:

- **April 27** — ADA Mini Convention, Richmond, VA.

- **April 28-May 1** — AAA 6th Annual Convention, Richmond, VA.

- **July 17-20** — Self Help for Hard of Hearing People 9th International Convention, Baltimore, MD.

- **August 31-Sept. 4** — International Hearing Society's Annual Convention, Nashville, TN.

- **September 18-21** — AAO-HNS Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA.

- **October 13-16** — ADA Annual Convention, Palm Springs, CA.

- **November 17-21** — ASHA Annual Convention, New Orleans, LA.

**Begin by  
looking at your  
practice/business  
and the kind  
of hearing care  
service you give  
your patients.**

Audio and videotapes of all sessions are available from the CMC.

Such an effort of working collaboratively with a long-term campaign, *can* change the image of our industry. Increasing the public's awareness of the importance of hearing health will not help our industry if we aren't creating more satisfied customers. Whose responsibility is it? It is all of ours — begin by looking at your practice/business and the kind of hearing care service you give your patients. What can you do to increase patient satisfaction?

Throughout this issue of HEARING INSTRUMENTS you will find articles devoted to CMC's Year of Patient Satisfaction. There's practical information you can put to use in your office. Take the time to read about the advertising and marketing messages we are sending, while learning about ways to determine the hearing aid benefits on your patients, as well as methods of measuring customer satisfaction from a dispenser's experience in a busy practice. □