



**TEXAS ACADEMY
of AUDIOLOGY**

SEPTEMBER 2023



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR TAA PRESIDENT

**Tracy Board, AuD
TAA President**

Do you remember attending your first conference as a graduate student? Maybe it was TAA or AAA or even ASHA. Do you remember visiting the vendors in the exhibit hall and learning about new hearing aids or new testing equipment? Or sitting in a presentation given by a person whose articles you had read and reread for a class? Or simply meeting and talking with practicing audiologists from private practices, hospitals, or the VA – places you were excited to work at one day?

What if you could help a graduate student have that same experience?

The TAA Board, together with the Scott Haug Foundation, is encouraging each and every audiologist in Texas to help graduate students attend the TAA conference this year. The total cost for a student to register for conference is \$150.00. Several audiologists across the state have already committed to donating enough for one or more students' costs to be completely covered. I would like to encourage you, too, to help our students with a donation of ANY SIZE.

Our goal is to cover the costs for at least 40 students – and you can help us get there! All you have to do is make a donation to the Scott Haug Foundation's Venmo account:

@ScottHaug84

In the notes, just type "Pay It Forward" to ensure that your donation goes straight into the fund designated for students.

We look forward to seeing each and every one of you, and hopefully every student who wants to attend, in San Marcos this October –
LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL!!!!!!!!!!

What's new?

**Get your krewe
ready for TAA
Conference--
REGISTER NOW
10-12 to 10-14**

**Conference
Announcements &
Speaker Bios**

**TAA Board
nominations**

**PAY IT FORWARD
with Scott Haug
Foundation**

**Medicare Direct
Access in Texas**

**ATTN STUDENTS
Want to Attend TAA
Conference??**

**Pediatric Working
Group
Announcement**

TEXAS ACADEMY OF AUDIOLOGY
24TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE



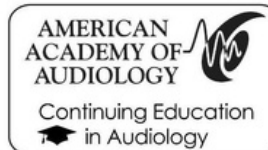
**MARDI
GRAS**
IN SAN MARCOS

OCTOBER 12-14, 2023
EMBASSY SUITES

CEUs Offered



Texas Academy of Audiology is a CE approved sponsor by TDLR for Texas licensing for **Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists and Hearing Instrument Fitters and Dispensers**. This conference is approved for a maximum of 1.15 CEUs (11.5 hours) for state licensing requirements. The conference will also provide **0.2 CEUs (2 hours) of Ethics**.



TAA has submitted for approval by the American Academy of Audiology to offer Academy CEUs for this activity. Pending approval this program is worth a **maximum of 1.15 CEUs**. Academy approval of this continuing education activity will not imply endorsement of course content only and does not imply endorsement of course content,

specific products, or clinical procedure, or adherence of the event to the Academy's Code of Ethics. Any views that are presented are those of the presenter/CE Provider and not necessarily of the American Academy of Audiology. This activity will include 0.5 Tier 1 CEUs.

SILENT AUCTION

Submissions to the TAA Conference Silent Auction: Email to sarah.williams@river-ent.com

1. Description of Item
2. Picture/ Graphic of Item
3. Value of Item
4. Minimum (Starting) Bid of Item

Don't forget to bring your item or a gift certificate for the item!!

Texas Academy of Audiology

Thursday, October 12th

2023 PRE-CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

8:00am – 12:00pm TAA Golf Scramble

1:00pm-5:00pm Pre-Conference Afternoon Workshops

<u>TIME</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>
1:00-5:00	Natus Medical	Hands-On Student Workshop
1:00-5:00	TAA	Pediatric Networking

SPONSOR WORKSHOPS

<u>TIME</u>	<u>SPONSOR</u>	<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
1:00-3:00	Oticon	Getting to Know Oticon: Philosophy and Technology	Mandy Weydeck, AuD
	GN ReSound	Resound: The Future of Hearing in Noise	Katie Crane, AuD Lesley Lee, AuD
3:00-5:00	Signia USA	Empowering People with Hearing Loss	Sonie Harris, AuD
	E3 Texas Special Instruments	Changing Landscape of Audiology	Laura Prigge, AuD

CEUs for workshops are the responsibility of the Sponsor

5:00pm-7:00pm

President's Welcome Reception

Honoring Lifetime Members & Past Presidents

All are welcome to attend

Street Tacos and Cash Bar

In Spring Lake Ballroom

Texas Academy of Audiology

Friday, October 13, 2023 – Schedule (0.55 CEUs Available)

7:30am – 8:00am		Registration with Coffee/Tea	CEUs
8:00am – 8:15am		“Presidents’ Talk” Tracy Board, AuD, TAA President	
8:15am – 9:00am		Outstanding Audiologist and Outstanding Audiology Student Award Presentation and Introduction of Scott Haug Keynote Speaker J. T. Beckman, AuD	
8:30am – 9:30am		“Turning a Disability into an Ability” Emma Faye Rudkin	0.10
10:00am – 10:30am		BREAK with Sponsors	
10:30am – 12:00pm	I	“A New Way of Looking at KPI’s” Tier 1 Nancy Duncan, AuD	0.15
	II	“Hide and Seek: Hidden Hearing Loss” Tier 1 Christopher Spankovich, AuD, PhD	0.15
	III	“Overview of Tinnitus and Sound Tolerance Issues” Tier 1 Gail Whitelaw, PhD	0.15
12:00pm – 1:00pm		Lunch Buffet with Sponsors Grab some lunch and then join us for Legislative Issues	
1:00pm – 2:00pm	I	“Legislative Update: 2023” Legislative Panel moderated by Alex Morris, AuD	0.10
2:00pm – 2:30pm		TAA Business Meeting	
2:30pm – 3:00pm		BREAK with Sponsors	
	I	Student Poster Session Moderator Grace Kendrick, AuD	0.05
3:00pm – 4:30pm	I	“Creative Solutions for an Ever Changing Audiology Landscape” Tier 1 Nancy Duncan, AuD and Jonathan McGiverin	0.15
	II	“Patient Centered Differential Diagnosis” Tier 1 Chris Spankovich, AuD, PhD	0.15
	III	“Contemporary Considerations with Auditory Processing Disorders” Tier 1 Gail Whitelaw, PhD	0.15
4:30pm – 6:30pm		BREAK with Sponsors / Silent Auction 22nd Annual Reception Light appetizers provided with Cash Bar	
6:30pm-7:00pm		CHANGE INTO COSTUME FOR DINNER DANCE	

7:00pm–10:00pm - 8th Annual Scott Haug Foundation/Texas Academy of Audiology Bash

“Mardi Gras in San Marcos”

Texas Academy of Audiology

Saturday, October 14, 2023 – Schedule (0.6 CEUs Available)

7:30am – 8:00am		Registration – Sponsors Open with Coffee/Tea	CEUs
8:00am – 9:30am	I	“Adding Mobile Audiology to Your Private Practice” Brandi Murphy, AuD, PhD, CCC-A	0.15
	II	“Guidelines for Referring Adults for a Traditional Cochlear Implant Candidacy Evaluation” Arun Joshi, AuD and Terry Zwolan, PhD	0.15
	III	“Putting it all Together: Enhancing the Verification, Validation and Performance Measures” Shawna Jackson, AuD, Stephanie Williams, AuD & Amanda Frost, AuD	0.15
9:30am – 10:00am		BREAK with Sponsors with Coffee/Tea	
10:00am – 11:30am	I	“Listening Fatigue in College Students” Brandi Murphy, AuD, PhD, CCC-A	0.15
	II	“Caloric Stimulation Test with Water and Air: Myths and Facts” Lilian Felipe, PhD	0.15
	III	“How Can We Help You? Programs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services” Olivia Rains and Sam Harris	0.15
11:30am – 12:00pm		BREAK with Sponsors – Grab Lunch	
12:00pm – 3:00pm		Student Leadership Symposium	
12:00pm – 1:00pm		“Amplification Tech Talk Round Table” Lunch with Platinum Sponsors Moderator: Tracy Board, AuD	0.10
1:00pm - 3:00pm		Tier 1 - “ETHICS” “Practical Implementation of DEI Initiatives for the Hearing Healthcare Workplace” Carol Cokely, PhD and Stephanie Fowler, AuD	0.20

Get those calendars marked for the coming years

2024 in Houston – October 17-19, 2024

Marriott Houston South Hobby Airport
9100 Gulf Freeway, Houston, TX 77017

2025 in Denton – October 9-11, 2025

Embassy Suites by Hilton Denton Convention Center
3100 Town Center Trail, Denton, TX 76201

CONFERENCE BADGES SHOULD BE WORN AT ALL TIMES.

**A BADGE IS REQUIRED FOR ADMITTANCE INTO EXHIBITOR HALL,
CEU SESSIONS, RECEPTIONS, AND LUNCH SERVICE.**

TAA 24th Annual Conference in San Marcos

Carmen Landry, AuD
TAA Conference Chair

Hello All!

We are getting closer to our amazing state conference, Mardi Gras in San Marcos. The registration is open and ready for you. Please register before the early bird date closes so you can receive your discounted rate! This year we will be crowning a Royal Court at the Dinner Dance for the 3 people who donate the most to the PAC. TAA has been working very diligently on moving bills through the Texas government, and the only way we can do this is through your help! Be sure to visit the PAC table in the main sponsor room to donate and receive custom beads!

With the theme being **Mardi Gras**, I have had some questions about “how do I dress for the Dinner Dance/Costume Contest?”. There are many ways you can achieve a Mardi Gras look. One way is the “Mardi Gras Ball” look. Grab your favorite dress/pants and add a feathery mask, boa or beads! This is very classic. For those thinking outside the box, have your Krewe come with a theme like many of the parades that happen during the Mardi Gras season. I am looking forward to seeing all of you for our Southern Style Dinner with Mardi Gras feels!

We are looking forward to a great state conference this year, see y’all in October! I am looking forward to seeing each and every one of you at TAA October 12-14th so we can make this year an event to remember!

As they say from my home state of Louisiana,
Laissez les bons temps rouler!!!



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Scott Haug Keynote Speaker

Emma Faye Rudkin

“Turning a Disability into an Ability”

Emma Faye, who is profoundly deaf, is a national speaker who has touched the lives of thousands of people who have had the opportunity to hear her story. If there is one thing that her audience remembers about Emma, it is her ability to connect on a raw and genuine level to those around her. She speaks with authenticity and with an immense passion for those with hearing loss.

Practice Management Tier 1

Nancy Duncan, AuD

“A New Way of Looking at KPI’s”

We will be reviewing traditional KPI models to look at short term health of a business along with introducing a new model of looking at long term health of your business through the lens of value.

“Creative Solutions for an Ever-Changing Audiology Landscape”

Creative solutions in an ever-changing audiology landscape such as staffing, scheduling and setting yourself apart in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

Diagnostics Tier 1

Christopher Spankovich, AuD, PhD

“Hide and Seek: Hidden Hearing Loss”

Hidden hearing loss (HHL) or perceived hearing loss despite normal audiometric thresholds has garnered significant attention in the past decade. In this session we will explore the concept of HHL, pathophysiology, and differential diagnostic tools to seek out HHL.

“Patient Centered Differential Diagnosis”

Solving diagnostic challenges is important to both clinicians and patients. Various approaches to diagnostic exist, often relying on a battery of tests to quantify and or objectively measure audiological function. In this session we will discuss the importance of patient-clinician collaboration in the diagnostic process and management recommendations.

Pediatrics Tier 1

Gail Whitelaw, PhD

“Overview of Tinnitus and Sound Tolerance Issues in Pediatrics”

Practical approaches to tinnitus and sound tolerance issues including those in the pediatric population and the role of the audiologist!

“Contemporary Considerations with Auditory Processing Disorders”

This session will focus on current research that informs the assessment and management of auditory processing disorders in children and adults.



Ethics Tier 1

Carol Cokely, PhD and Stephanie Fowler, AuD, PhD

“Practical Implementation of DEI Initiatives for the Hearing Healthcare Workplace”

Growing evidence highlights the necessity to improve cultural competency and humility in healthcare delivery systems. Diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and access is about creating an environment where all workforce members, patients, and health-professional students feel welcomed and valued. Building and prioritizing DEI efforts can result in an environment where all team members feel valued, may improve business metrics, and mitigate service disparities for underrepresented groups.

Brandi Murphy, AuD, PhD, CCC-A

“Auditory Processing Disorders, Listening Fatigue”

Research has shown that children with hearing loss experience listening fatigue. Recent research has shown similar results in adults with hearing loss. Research has examined normal hearing listeners and sustained effort and has shown negative implications on motivation, performance, coping skills, and effort. Do college students experience listening fatigue that will negatively impact their learning and performance?

“Adding Mobile Audiology to Your Private Practice”

Join the innovative movement of mobile audiology! The healthcare system has increased tele-health and mobile services for all fields including audiology. Determine the need in your area for mobile services as well as steps in creating a mobile aspect in addition to your existing clinic.

Arun Joshi, AuD and Terry Zwolan, PhD

“Guidelines for Referring Adults for a Traditional Cochlear Implant Candidacy Evaluation”

Routine audiological practices that can help determine if a patient should be referred for a cochlear implant (CI) candidacy evaluation will be described. The 60/60 guideline for CI referral and test procedures used in CI candidacy evaluations will be described. The important role audiologists play when counseling patients about their potential candidacy for a CI, and how this counseling impacts their willingness to consider an evaluation for this important treatment option will be discussed.

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Shawna Jackson, AuD, Stephanie Williams, AuD, and Amanda Frost, AuD
“Putting it all Together: Enhancing the Verification, Validation and Performance Measures.”

Best practices for amplification have long since been established, but clinical usage is still variable. In the pediatric population, it is critical to get it right. This session will be a grand rounds style that emphasizes amplification case studies from birth to 21 with emphasis on how each component of the verification, validation, and performance measures works together to make critical differences in outcomes.

Lilian Felipe, PhD

“Caloric Stimulation Test with Water and Air: Myths and Facts”

The caloric test is part of the assessment of patients with dizziness, as it provides a measure of vestibular deficit. The stimulus used to induce nystagmus response in the caloric test are water and air. It is important for all audiologists to evaluate and compare the differences between the two irrigation methods in caloric response.

Olivia Rains and Sam Harris

“How Can We Help You? Programs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services”

This session will cover the programs that the Texas Health and Human Services' Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services offers for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, their families, and service providers. Did you know that we provide a tuition waiver for students who meet hearing level criteria? We also have contractors who can assist you with our phone voucher program or help with technology for your patients and much more! Come learn how our programs can benefit you!

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1. 4.36 dB SNR improvement compared to legacy products. Jepsen et al (2022)
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Scott Haug Golf Outing - Scramble at TAA

 **Thursday, October 12, 2023 at 8:00am CDT**

The Bandit Golf Club -
www.banditgolfclub.com
6019 FM725, New Braunfels,
TX 78130

Registration at 8am - Shotgun start at 8:30am

Cost will be \$75 per participant which includes: Green fee, Cart rental,
and Range balls.

Mulligans available for **\$10/mulligan - \$35/4 mulligans**

Proceeds go toward the Dr. Robert J. Dunlop Student Scholarship Fund.

No Refunds for Cancellations after 1 October 2023



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The Scoop from The Scott Haug Foundation

Scott Marquardt
Scott Haug Foundation President

Greetings, Texas Audiologists,
We at the Scott Haug Foundation, together with the Texas Academy of Audiology Board, are always looking for more ways to engage Audiology students in our professional organizations.

This year, we are setting a goal of sponsoring every graduate student in Texas to attend the Texas Academy of Audiology Annual Conference in San Marcos in October. We are reaching out to YOU for help!

Please consider making a tax deductible donation to the Scott Haug Foundation to sponsor student registration for the conference – a donation of **\$150** will cover the cost of registration for one student.

Whether you choose to sponsor one student or 20, this is your opportunity to help students connect more with the Audiology community in Texas!

Donate to the Scott Haug Foundation using the SHF Venmo account:
<https://account.venmo.com/u/ScottHaug84>

Add a note "Sponsor a Student" along with your name and/or your practice's name so that we may recognize your contribution.



"Since my first Scott Haug Conference in 1998 when I was a graduate student, I always told myself that when I had the financial capacity to give back to students I would. I have always lived by the adage of "pay it forward". As veteran audiologists it is our responsibility to foster the next generation in whichever capacity suits us best"

– Kelli House

"When I was a student, attending conferences was one of the most important and exciting opportunities to become more involved with the audiology community. Last year, I was able to sponsor two students from my alma mater, UTD, and both students were able to make very important connections with both conference sponsors and audiologists in the position to hire them in the future – it actually was a life-changing event for them! I hope that every private practice owner in Texas can make a commitment to the future of our profession in this way"

– Tracy Board



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TAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINEES



Jill Davis, AuD

I appreciate your consideration for Member at Large on the TAA Board of Directors. My primary goal is to support the reclassification of audiologists to practitioners under Medicare statute, by helping pass the Medicare Audiology Access Improvement Act of 2023. By taking a more comprehensive approach to patient care, we can transition from perceived retail clinics to a medical model of hearing healthcare that will improve our status in the medical community and increase our reimbursement with insurance. We can strengthen our relationships with physicians and provide our patients with improved access to our clinics for quality care when we practice to the full scope of our license. I would also like to be a resource for audiologists who may be navigating ethical dilemmas within our field. We are in an exciting time for the field of audiology and although we have been faced with a few disrupters, the future is very bright if we are able to embrace change.



Hunter Gerhart, AuD

I am interested in continuing to serve on the TAA Board as I believe that involvement with TAA legislative issues is the best place to affect change and positive growth for our profession. I have enjoyed serving on the Board this past year and would love another opportunity to help positively impact our profession by working through legislative issues. In addition, I am passionate about ensuring best practices are followed and protecting the consumer and our field from infringement of other professionals with limited education and scope of practice.



Anna Jilla, AuD, PhD

As the current TAA Vice-President of Professional Issues and Member-at-Large for the Board of Directors, it would be an honor to be re-elected to serve Texas audiologists during this era of intense hearing health care market and other Medicare policy changes. In my past two years of service in this role, TAA Professional Issues has worked alongside TAA Legislative Issues to support successful health policy changes related to payer policy and coverage of hearing aids. Professional Issues has also increased educational offerings for TAA members for coding and reimbursement through TAA Talks webinars and via TAA Newsletters. We have also successfully implemented CPT code changes through Texas Medicaid and are working to develop research evidence on accessibility of audiology services through Texas Medicaid--specifically hearing aid and cochlear implant coverage (survey and data request approvals are forthcoming). Building on our current momentum, it would be an honor to continue to utilize my unique knowledge and skill set in service of Texas-based audiologists as a Member-at-Large for the TAA Board of Directors-- Vice-President of Professional issues for 2023-2025. Thank you for your consideration of my nomination.

TAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINEES



Sarah McAlexander, AuD

The Texas Academy of Audiology plays an important role in advancing our careers as audiologists, as well as ensuring that our patients are able to access hearing healthcare and continue to communicate with their family and friends. It would be an honor to serve on the Texas Academy of Audiology board and continue to help our profession advance, despite any challenges we may face in the coming years, and ensure that our patients are able to access the important services we provide. By helping to support the team of audiologists who serve on the board of directors, and adding my own knowledge, experience, and passion into the mix, I hope to be a small part of the team that helps audiology in Texas continue to thrive for many years to come.



Alexander Morris, AuD

Texas audiologists change lives every day, and I can think of no better way to serve this wonderful profession than by leading at the state level. In my four years on the TAA Board, I've witnessed the strength of our united audiology voice effecting change through legislative reforms spanning hearing aid insurance mandates, OTC regulations, and newborn cCMV screenings. With a track record of initiating positive change and a vision to foster collaboration, I am ready to champion our profession through strategic advocacy and forward-thinking initiatives. The groundwork has been laid, and with your support I look forward to securing a thriving future for Texas audiologists and the patients we serve.



Holly Pavlicek, AuD

In the short amount of time I have been in Audiology, I have found a passion to help the field grow and flourish. Change starts at the local level and I would love to be a part of the bigger picture. I believe my ability to adapt in different circumstances, organization skills, and enthusiastic personality make me an ideal candidate for the TAA Board of Directors.



Sarah Williams, AuD

I would like to continue to participate in the TAA Board of Directors to support the interests of Texas Audiologists and our patients. I have worked with the TAA Board as the Vice President of Public Relations for the past two years to develop the newsletter and Conference Silent Auction.

Membership Update

Renew or join by 9/10/2023 for 2023 membership

The Texas Academy of Audiology relies on annual membership dues to support Texas audiologists in every facet. We currently have 432 members- thank you to those who have joined and renewed! If you haven't renewed your membership or have never joined TAA, there has never been a better time. TAA already does so much for Texas audiologists, and when we have the support of more audiologists, we can do so much more to protect our scope of practice, reimbursement, and representation- not to mention bring in bigger and better learning opportunities and membership perks for you all.

Important membership deadline update: 2023 membership enrollment will end on 9/10/2023. We will not be offering renewal for the current year (and therefore discounted membership rate) at the 2023 conference, but you will be able to renew for 2024 at that time! If you wish to attend conference at the membership rate, **please renew TODAY at www.texasaudiology.org**

Feel free to reach out with any membership questions:

Jamie Myers Hand, AuD

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YOUR OTC MANUAL

OTC finally became a reality in October 2022. Many in our industry were worried about their disruptive power and how they might drastically change the landscape for audiologists. In response, Fuel developed our OTC manual to let members take back control of the decisions around these products and develop a plan to either incorporate them into the practice or not while ensuring ongoing success.



Scan the QR code to request your
copy of the OTC manual.

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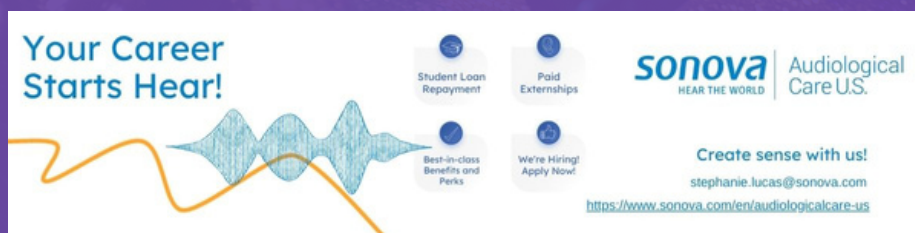
TAA Pediatric Working Group Update:

35 pediatric audiologists from around the state have been working together since May to develop a plan for improving the loss to follow-up rate for newborn hearing screenings in Texas. Two committees have formed – one focused on improving access to pediatric audiology services and the other focused on collaborating with non-audiology stakeholders. We are setting goals for the next year over the next few months and would love to have more providers join us. If you are an audiologist interested in joining this group, it is not too late. Please contact me at Stephanie.Williams@utdallas.edu.

Pediatric Networking Roundtable:

Join us at TAA in San Marcos for a pre-conference networking event for pediatric audiology providers! We will meet on October 12 from 1-3pm. You will hear from the Pediatric Working Group and representatives from the Statewide Outreach Center, TEHDI, and Texas Hands and Voices will also be in attendance to talk about how we can improve care for Deaf/hard of hearing children in Texas.

Stephanie Williams, AuD, ABAC, PASC



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Attention All Students!

Grace Kendrick, AuD

Please encourage Texas Audiology Students to attend conference!

We have many amazing opportunities for students this year!

Questions can be sent to
grace.m.holderman@gmail.com.

NEW! Saturday, October 14th 12:00-3:00PM:

Scott Haug Student Symposium Session

Provides students the opportunity to learn and become more involved with legislative issues and advocacy efforts within the field of audiology.

Students will have the opportunity to learn more about the Scott Haug Foundation and TAA.

Thursday, October 12th: Student Pre-conference:

Natus is providing hands-on learning opportunities for students to gain familiarity with ABR, OAE, vHIT, and VNG systems. This opportunity is available to the students at no additional cost. A registration link for the Student pre-conference will be available shortly.

Friday, October 13th: Student Poster Session:

Our poster session will feature posters highlighting either clinical cases or novel research projects from students of the Texas AuD programs or externs at Texas facilities. Submissions are open only to student members of TAA. Students must be available on Friday, October 13 2:30-3:00PM for poster presentation at the conference.

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TAA Political action committee (@taa-PAC)

ATTN: TEXAS AUDIOLOGISTS



Kimberly DeBona

@TAA-PAC

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SUPPORT YOUR TAA PAC!

Are you ready for a great conference? I know I am. I am ready to see the greatest audiologists in Texas!

TAA PAC will be there and hoping you will consider donating to help fill our coffers. We need to get ready for the next election so we can get some of our agenda items passed. Please consider donating to PAC. If you are unable to come to conference, please consider donating online on the TAA website, sending a check to me or using Venmo @TAA-PAC or with the QR code below.

As always, we can only take personal funds, not business funds and we thank you for your support.

You may go online to the TAA website
https://texasaudiology.org/PAC_Donation
Or you may Venmo with the QR code to the right or
@TAA-PAC last 4 of cell: 7091

Finally, you can mail a check payable to TAA PAC to:

Kimberly DeBona
4016 Tiffany Trl
College Station, TX. 77845

*Mardi
Gras*

Limited Direct Access for Audiology Services through Medicare Part B: Review and Updates

Anna M. Jilla, Au.D., Ph.D.

Jo Mayo Endowed Assistant Professor of Audiology
Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas

At the beginning of 2023, Medicare Part B provisions included direct access to select audiology services for the first time. Prior to this change, all services provided by audiologists to Part B beneficiaries had to have evidence of medical necessity and a physician or other qualified non-physician practitioner order such that those services would be reimbursable. As of January 1, 2023, certain medically-necessary audiology services are reimbursable without a physician order.

A list of the 36 audiology codes that are available under the limited direct access provision can be found here: <https://www.audiology.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/coding-list-1-1.pdf>. This is different from the full list of audiology services that are reimbursable through Medicare Part B provisions: <https://www.cms.gov/files/zip/audiology-code-list-updated-7522.zip>). Services not included on the limited direct access provision list will still require both medical necessity and a physician order for payment.

In brief, this limited direct access provision constitutes a new benefit category for Medicare Part B beneficiaries. Under this provision, a list of 36 audiology services for assessment non-acute hearing issues can be reimbursed when performed by audiologists and do not require a physician order. Per Medicare guidance, “non-acute” is loosely defined as a gradual loss of hearing, generally in both ears. Audiologists are strongly encouraged to document the ‘non-acute’ nature of the hearing issue when utilizing this limited direct access benefit. This benefit can be used one time per patient per 12-month period. One or several of the 36 available codes can be reported for the 1 time per year benefit. The benefit will be exhausted for the year regardless of whether one or several audiology services were reported and billed on that specific date of service under the direct access provision. No benefit checker system has been established for this new benefit as of the writing of this article.

In order to report audiology services under this new direct access provision, audiologists will place the **AB modifier** next to each of the 36 available CPT codes that are reported on the 1500 claim form. If services were medically necessary and a physician order was on file, audiologists do not need to append the AB modifier to these service codes and may continue as usual with claims filing.

The most recent claim form guidance from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on July 13, 2023 provides the following guidance to audiologists: (1) incorrect denials occurred as part of the initial implementation of this new benefit category and (2) audiologists are encouraged to resubmit returned claims under this new provision. More specifically, if the services on the claim form had the AB modifier appended to all codes, the attending provider’s NPI does not need to be reported (and any returned claims should be resubmitted with reason code 34963. If the claim included a mix of codes where some had the AB modifier appended and others did not, CMS recommends continuing to bill the billing provider’s NPI in the Attending field.

The Texas Academy of Audiology will continue to monitor updates from the CMS and disseminate them as they become available. Further, members of the Texas Academy of Audiology have engaged with the American Academy of Audiology in information gathering and sharing. If Texas Academy of Audiology members have questions or have encountered issues related to the new Medicare Part B Limited Direct Access Provision for Audiology, members are encouraged to submit those questions and comments to professionalissues@texasaudiology.org.

Resources

American Academy of Audiology, Codes for Tests that Audiologists can Bill with the AB Modifier for Nonacute Hearing Conditions without a Physician or NPP Order/Referral. <https://www.audiology.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/coding-list-1-1.pdf>

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Audiology Code List for Part B Services. <https://www.cms.gov/files/zip/audiology-code-list-updated-7522.zip>.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Summary of Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Rule 2023. <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/mm12982-medicare-physician-fee-schedule-final-rule-summary-cy-2023.pdf>.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Medicare Learning Network (MLN) Connects Newsletter. Published July 13, 2023. Accessed August 22, 2023. Available at: https://www.cms.gov/outreach-and-education/outreach/ffsprovpartprog/provider-partnership-email-archive/2023-07-13-mlnc#_Toc140123839



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