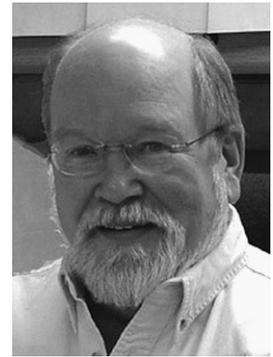


Guest Editorial

Research at the VA Medical Center, Mountain Home, Tennessee

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In 2002 the audiologists at the James H. Quillen VA Medical Center in Mountain Home, Tennessee, and at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) in Johnson City formed a unique collaboration to develop an AuD program. The program now consists of 20 audiologists with a variety of terminal degrees (13 PhDs, 5 AuDs, and 2 master's). The PhD faculty are Drs. Pat Chase, Saravanan Elangovan, Marc Fagelson, and Jacek Smurzynski at ETSU and Drs. Faith Akin, Earl Johnson, Elizabeth Leigh-Paffenroth, Owen Murnane, Colleen Noe, Sherri Smith, Joanna Tampus (Knoxville VA Outpatient Clinic), and Richard Wilson at the VA.

The research program at the VA is a key ingredient in the success of the joint AuD program. The multifaceted research program in the VA provides research funding and is used for the recruitment and retention of faculty. Several of the faculty (Johnson, Leigh-Paffenroth, Smith, Tampus) are participating in the VA Career Development Award (CDA) program, which funds investigators 2–5 yr to spend 80% of their time in research. The VA Merit Review program, which is similar to the National Institutes of Health R01 program, funds investigator-initiated proposals for 3–5 yr. Currently, Akin, Murnane, and Wilson are participants in the Merit Review program, with many of the grants involving multiple VA sites and other institutions. For the past 10 yr we have been fortunate to have been designated a VA Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP), funded by the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Service. The REAP, which is a small program project grant, provides core funding for equipment, pilot studies, graduate students, and other research-related activities.

One aspect of our research program of which we are proud is the diverse area encompassed by our collective research interests, which covers much of the audiology scope of practice. The articles in this issue involving eight of the faculty members reflect this diversity. Dr. Akin's research focuses on the clinical assessment of otolith function. In their article, Drs. Akin and Murnane and colleagues describe the use of the subjective visual vertical (SVV) test for vestibular assessment and provide

normative data on young individuals during bilateral and unilateral centrifugation conditions. As part of his CDA, Dr. Johnson recently spent 2.5 mo at the Australian National Acoustic Laboratories with Dr. Harvey Dillon. This collaboration led to the current article in which generic prescriptive methods are examined for similarities and differences in prescribed insertion gain and bandwidth followed by subsequent predictions of loudness and speech intelligibility in quiet as well as in noise. Dr. Leigh-Paffenroth's area of research is the integration of electrophysiologic and psychophysical measures of auditory perception in listeners with hearing loss. She and Dr. Elangovan investigated the effects of early aging and high-frequency sensorineural hearing loss on behavioral measures of auditory temporal coding and self-perceived problems of hearing. Dr. Murnane's area of research is the clinical application of measures of human vestibular and auditory electrophysiology. In his article with Dr. Akin and colleagues, he quantifies the effects of a number of stimulus and recording parameters on the normal response characteristics of the ocular vestibular evoked myogenic potential using air-conduction stimuli. Drs. Smith and Fagelson combined their respective areas of interest, self-efficacy and tinnitus, to introduce the concept of tinnitus self-efficacy. In their article, they summarize the development of a self-efficacy questionnaire for tinnitus management and describe its application to the clinical treatment of patients suffering from chronic tinnitus. Finally, yours truly has worked for many years with the various aspects of speech perception, especially examining the difficulties that older listeners with hearing loss have understanding speech in background noise. In concert with this theme, the Wilson article addresses, within the context of aging, the relations among pure-tone thresholds, word recognition in quiet, and word recognition in noise.

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