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Tech Talk - Pairing and Connectivity Tips for the Discover Next Platform

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- My name is Natalie Rooker. I am one of the regional trainers with Unitron. And thank you so much for joining me today to go over this quick half hour tech talk session to talk about pairing and connectivity tips with our Discover Next Instruments. We also do have Kristina Petraitis with us today as well. She is also with Unitron, and it's going to help monitor the question, and answer part as well. Today we are going to talk about all things Bluetooth including tips for successful pairing, and Bluetooth pairing and connectivity troubleshooting tips as well. Connectivity is a frequent topic for us as hearing healthcare providers, and as technological capabilities have advanced significantly in recent years. The topic of connectivity has become something that we now have to address clinically on almost a daily basis.

According to Pew Research, as of 2019, 81% of all Americans own a smartphone. Now as a cohort, the 65 plus population does have the lowest adoption rate at just over 50%. However, if we look at historic data, we can see that the adoption rate in this 65 plus segment is trending upwards. And you can see that on the red bars here on this bar graph. As those more tech-friendly baby boomers are entering this age bracket, the data shows a steady increase in smartphone use in that age group. And when we look at the US smartphone market, it has really mostly boiled down to two camps of technology. Those who use the Apple iOS technology, and those who use smartphones based on the Android platform.

Or you might like to think of it as the blue bubble text messages versus the green bubble text messages. So now as clinicians, not only do we have to think about what product would best serve the patient in terms of their audiologic needs, their dexterity considerations, their lifestyle. Now, we also need to consider what type of phone technology they use. Are they a smartphone user? What type of smartphone? Are they a flip phone user? Fortunately, the type of phone that a patient has does not have to restrict the choice of hearing aid technology that you recommend because our discover next hearing aids are made for all phones.

Our Discover Next platform uses the Sonova Proprietary Sword 3.0 Chip which is the only one in the industry that provides options for both Apple iOS and Android users, and also folks who have the more traditional flip phones. And when they are using the hearing aids for phone calls, remember that Discover Next does provide truly hands-free phone functionality. The patient can answer and hang up phone calls by using the button on the hearing aid, and they don't have to hold the phone near their mouth in order to talk. So speaking of the Sword 3.0 Chip, let's go ahead and take a poll here, and I'm just gonna get that set up for us. And that should be coming up on your screen here.

So how many 2.4 gigahertz protocols do you think that our Sword 3.0 chip supports? Is it 4, 8, 6 or also I have no idea. So safe choice there. So I'll give that just a few more seconds here. Okay, perfect. And it does look like we are split right about down the middle at six and I have no idea which again fully acceptable result there. So we'll go ahead and end that, and feel free to X out of that little poll screen on your end as well, so you can see the full screen again of the presentation. And the sixes did have it. So it is the only chip in the industry with six 2.4 gigahertz connectivity protocols built into just one chip. And that does include three Bluetooth protocols. As the first one being Bluetooth classic hands-free which again allows for that truly hands-free phone streaming.

Bluetooth Classic A2DP which allows for binaural stereo streaming to both ears for audio and media. And Bluetooth low energy which is used for our remote control as well as for our app and for programming with our software. And we do have three Sonova proprietary protocols as well. Airstream, which works with our TV connector and our PartnerMic. The Sonova Binaural Protocol which allows for audio transmission between two devices in a binaural fitting, and RogerDirect which allows for easy pairing to Roger microphones without having to add any external receivers. So what does all of

that mean for your patients wearing Discover Next hearing aids, and more specifically, what does it mean for them when it comes to phone usage?

It means they have a lot of options and they can connect to a wide variety of devices. So how do we feel about Bluetooth? I think there are a lot of opinions in this area because sometimes it can be a little difficult having to learn how to troubleshoot those issues. Our profession continues to change. And now along with being hearing care experts, we also need to become IT experts when it comes to pairing and connectivity. My goal today is to try to ease some of that difficulty for you by providing you with a couple of reminders regarding best practices for pairing processes that'll help ensure smooth experience, and also to share some tips and tricks, and other troubleshooting suggestions as well that might come in handy when you're working with your patient.

So let's start with what could be your first question which is does made for all actually include my patient's phone? Because we do support our hearing instruments with Bluetooth classic hands-free profile. We support a wide variety of phones even older version phones, whether that's Android, Apple or flip phone. How can you verify? You can easily check through our phone compatibility web portal, and if you don't yet have that page book marked, you can access it through our true fit fitting software. You would go to the instruments menu, the selection tab, and then right there in the middle, you have the check smartphone compatibility button. If you click on that, it'll take you straight to that compatibility website where you can then type the phone model in into the free text field as you click here, just hit enter, and it will provide you with some details on the phone.

And if you scroll just a little bit further down, you will see compatibility information both for phone calls and streaming as well as for use with our app. You'll also notice that there are some instructional videos there as well that walk you through how to do any of the pairing for both devices there, it is that simple. So let's start at the beginning

with Bluetooth pairing, and talk about a recommended sequence right off the bat that will help to ensure minimal loss of Bluetooth connection down the road. Now this sequence is based on what all you are providing for your patient, and potentially you could be pairing for phone, and media connectivity like for phone calls, and streaming music and podcasts.

You could be pairing for app connectivity, and you also could be pairing the hearing aids with an additional accessory solution. Assuming you were setting a patient up with all three of those. The first recommended step is to pair to the phone in the phone's Bluetooth pairing screen. The next step would then be to pair to the Remote Plus app after that phone pairing is complete, and the last step, the last step would then be to pair to the accessory whether that's the TV connector, or the PartnerMic or the remote control. And all of those accessories are very easily, and simply paired outside of the software. DiscoverNext does support pairing to two Bluetooth devices for calls and streaming.

So for example, you could pair to a cell phone, and to a tablet or a computer. As a note, when you are pairing to a second device, you do first want to turn off Bluetooth on the first device in order to be able to pair to the second. And it's the same idea in switching from a connected to a non-connected device, you would need to turn Bluetooth off from that currently connected device in order to be able to switch over to the other one, and vice versa. And have a note with any tablets, or laptops that you're pairing to For best performance, we do recommend that those have Bluetooth Version 4.2 or later. So let's get into connectivity troubleshooting.

And a great first step here is to just verify what is actually connected on the phone. In the phone's Bluetooth pairing screen, if the patient has a binaural fit, and they're paired for phone calls, and also paired to the app, there should be a total of three hearing devices listed on that Bluetooth pairing screen. The one that you see on the bottom

here where it says R hearing aid is the connection that's going to enable binaural phone calls, and binaural stereo media streaming. The two with the LE here are listed as LE because they are reflecting the connection to our app, and our app uses the Bluetooth LE protocol. As a note here, the LE devices should say not connected on this screen.

That's because the app is not actively open in the front at the same time as you are looking at the screen. As soon as your patient switches back over to their app, the hearing aids will then reconnect. And once you've done that, you verify the all Bluetooth devices are successfully connected. There are a few other general troubleshooting tips that can be really helpful with stable connectivity. First one is to fully power down the phone. Phones do benefit and overall performance from being turned off completely and rebooted. Think about computer and how it needs to be shut down properly and rebooted on a regular basis, phones function in the same way, so regular rebooting is a good tip.

Check to see if your patient might be nearing a storage capacity on their phone because that can cause disruption to connection if the memory on the phone is nearly full. You can also check how many apps are open. If there are several apps running in the background, that can also affect performance and connectivity. We just swipe those away to close them out the background. And if those connectivity issues are still occurring, go ahead and delete all the Bluetooth pairings, removing from the app, removing from the Bluetooth pairing screen, and just start over from scratch following that same pairing sequence that we talked about before. So let's review some troubleshooting tips. If a customer reports concerns with call quality specifically.

One issue that could occur is hissing or static on an iPhone. And if that does occur for your patient, a good suggestion is to disable Bluetooth adaptive bandwidth and switch it to fixed bandwidth instead. And this can be done in two ways either in our TrueFit

fitting software, or via the RemotePlus app. In order to do so in the software, go ahead and go to the end fitting menu hearing instrument set up tab, select Bluetooth, and then just uncheck in that box where it says enable adaptive bandwidth. Now again, you or your patient can also do this through the app by going to the app menu, selecting my hearing aids, and then selecting adaptive Bluetooth, and just sliding it off right there as well.

If this thing or static is still present, you could then pair the instruments to a different phone in order to see if that issue does still persist when it is a different phone model in use. A few other phone side that you could check out. First is to verify that the iOS is up to date, and as a last resort you could also reset the network settings on the phone. This is located in the phone settings, general, reset and reset network settings. Now as a note here, resetting network settings is also going to reset the cellular network. And so any stored passwords like for WiFi, for VPN, those will all be lost. So before you take the step, you just want to make sure that your patient's aware of that, and that they know where to access those passwords.

Now, say that you have a patient come in, and they tell you, "Things sound great on my end when I'm on the phone, everything sounds nice, but the people I'm talking to say that they're having difficulty hearing me. It's cutting in and out. There's these spaces of silence, they can't hear me at all." For an issue like that, an anecdotal solution that you can try is to adjust the sound conductor setting in our software for the Bluetooth phone, and slide that from two all the way to eight. So you can access that in the fitting menu by going to configure features, sound conductor and Bluetooth phone right here. And again, just slide that all the way from two over to eight.

Now how does a side note this will have some effect on your patient's sound quality as well because it is also upping their speech enhancement when they're talking on the phone from two to an eight. If you've made that change within the software, and they

are still reporting the same sort of issues, we'll make that same suggestion that we made before which is switching that bandwidth adjustment from adaptive to fixed. And again, you can do that either in the software or in that front. One other tip to keep in mind is to also check the receiver link for your patient, and make sure that it's not too long for them. If it is a little bit long, that could cause the hearing aid to be positioned further back from the top of the penna which is also moving that microphone further away from your patient's mouth.

And that microphone is picking up their voice, and sending it back to the phone. So if it's too far back, that could also affect the sound quality for that far end listener. Now how about intermittent call quality? There is a first simple step that you can check, and that is if they are connected to WiFi. And if so, to consider disabling it, and just choosing cellular data instead. For example, let's say that your patient goes into Starbucks, they get a drink, and they connect to Starbucks WiFi. They're on a phone call there, and then they leave. And as they leave while they're on the phone, they're distancing themselves from the store, and from that WiFi signal.

So the signal will weaken, and that phone call will be compromised. So a nice easy step to check is to just make sure that WiFi is turned off in those situations. Let's review some troubleshooting tips. If a customer reports concerns with the hearing aids just generally seeming to cut out, or to be very intermittent. Event driven system sounds like text notifications, calendar reminders, app notifications. These can all cause the phone to generate sound which then triggers the hearing instruments to switch to the media nav streaming program because they're assuming that that patient is trying to stream the sound from the phone. When this happens, the hearing aid microphones for the environment are then going to attenuate in order to focus on that streamed signal.

And for the patient, that can sound like the hearing aids are being intermittent like they're cutting in and out. There are a lot of different events that can cause this type of reaction. Some might be more obvious than others, but disabling app and system notifications can help to prevent this from happening. To do so, you can go to the settings, and notifications, and you'll see a list of all the apps on the phone, and their corresponding notifications settings. If you do have an idea of which app or event is causing the problems for your patient, you can go in and find that specific app that's causing the most issues. And then you can simply turn off the notifications in question to prevent the hearing aids from switching.

And that can be a really nice simple fix, but sometimes it might be a little too global. The patient might still want a notification like a pop-up or a banner, they just don't want that audio piece of it. In that case, it is possible to go into the notification settings for the apps and question, and just disable the sound associated with the notice. That way they can still get the banner, or the lock screen notifications. They just won't get that sound. Disabling sounds and haptics is also useful when your patient has that sort of a complaint to make sure that the hearing aids are not going into that streaming program. For an iPhone, going into sounds and haptics, and turning off keyboard clicks, lock sounds, system haptics, raised to wake, and for an Android, going into those system sounds, and turning off any controls that will cause sounds with touching the phone, and also turning off easy mute and lift to wait.

Talking about call routing. For an iPhone, incoming call audio will route based on how the call is answered. If your patient answers the call using the button on their hearing aids. They will then hear that call in their hearing instrument. If they have a Bluetooth connection with their vehicle, and they answer a phone call on the steering wheel, then that call is then going to go through the car speakers instead. And if they actually touch the phone itself to answer the call, that call will then route through the phone handset.

So if your patient does come in and they tell you, "I can't hear the caller when I answer my phone." Do a little bit of digging because that could be due to a call routing issue.

Again, with an iPhone that call routing is defaulted automatic meaning that how you answer is how the call is routed, but you can change that to always go to the hearing instrument instead. And the way you can do that is to go to settings and accessibility, select touch, call audio routing, and switch it from automatic to the Bluetooth headset instead. Discovery Next also does offer stereo sound media streaming. And depending on the type of phone, you can change the audio routing while you're actively listening to something. So for example, let's say your patient is watching a video, they're listening to it through their hearing aids, but someone comes in the room, and they want to share the video with that family member or friend.

They can change this audio routing so that they can hear the signal as well. On an iPhone, this could be done in a few different ways. Swiping down from the top of the screen, and then switching, and looking at those available audio output options, and switching to the one that they'd like. Could also happen from swiping from up from the bottom of the screen, and then selecting that little audio box in the top right and again, switching it as they would like to. And they can also access it from the lock screen by clicking the side button, selecting the audio icon, and again, looking at their available options, and switching it as they need. On a Samsung Galaxy while streaming, they can swipe down from the top of the screen, and they'll see all of those audio options listed there, and can change it as they need.

And on a Google Pixel while they're streaming, they can press that little square button at the bottom of the screen. And again, they'll see all of their audio options, but one with the volume slider is the one that they're actively using at that moment. But again, they can switch it either to speaker, hearing aid any other Bluetooth connected device as well. As an additional resource, we do have a programming and pairing guide that

offers step-by-step instructions with images in order to help you pair to a phone to the RemotePlus app and to accessories. And it also includes some other additional tips. And if all of fails working with through these troubleshooting tips, your patients can contact the consumer hotline as well.

Either of these materials can be forwarded to you as PDF. You can also order them from your My Unitron account, or feel free to reach out to your Unitron account representative, and they'll be happy to get those materials over to you as well. So how do you feel about Bluetooth now? Hopefully a little bit better with some of those different troubleshooting tips to make those processes more smooth and easy for you. Thank you all so much for your time today. I'll remain on here in the room. If you do have any questions, feel free to jot those in the chat and I'll go over those. Thank you.