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Work Smarter, Not Harder to Achieve Natural Sound

Presenter: Lindsay Livengood, AuD, CCC-A

- Welcome to today's course, Work Smarter, Not Harder to Achieve Natural Sound, presented by Dr. Lindsay Livengood from Widex. This month on Audiology Online, we're celebrating innovation in the hearing industry with our fourth industry innovation summit. Thank you for joining today and we hope to see you in future classes. We would like to thank our title sponsor CareCredit and all of the companies who are working with us this year. It's now my great pleasure to turn the microphone over to our presenter today. Take it away, Lindsay.

- Thank you so much, Melissa. And thank you to Audiology Online for having us today. I am personally so excited to be here with you guys, because I get to be the lucky one to introduce you to a brand new hearing solution from Widex. And we are doing that today, as Melissa said, through a course titled, Work Smarter, Not Harder to Achieve Natural Sound. And we'll talk about a little bit more what that means here in just a few minutes. So for your learner objectives today, by the end, you will be able to describe three challenges that hearing aid wearers typically face. You'll be able to describe two benefits achieved by the groundbreaking design of our newest hearing solution, and you will be able to list two recent Widex accessories that truly enhance the wearer's ability to focus on what matters most to them.

Now, in full transparency, we had to submit these learner objectives way earlier than we were going to launch the product. So I had to be intentionally vague when writing these objectives, but I can promise you that you will learn even more than what is stated here in our time together today. I do have to tell you that I am an employee of Widex and I receive financial compensation. I have no relevant non-financial relationships to disclose. Just a tiny little bit about me before we get started. As Melissa said, my name's Lindsay Livengood, I am an audiologist and I do work with Widex, I've been there for seven years now. I started on the training team as a trainer.

I am now the clinical education program manager, meaning that I help develop all of our training content as well as manage our CEU program. When I am not doing all things hearing aid and audiology related, I am a mom of two young children and a proud military wife, as well as a travel enthusiast whenever I have the time to do that. So thanks again for having me today, we'll go ahead and get started. I'm gonna start by asking you a simple question, well, not a simple question, but something that's probably easy for you to answer as it's conversations that you have every single day in the clinic. But what is it that patients don't like about hearing aids?

I know we're in a webinar situation, so you can't actually answer me, but just something to think about and maybe some of these thoughts are coming to your mind. Maybe they don't like the way hearing aids look or feel on the ear. Maybe they have sound complaints, in particular, understanding in background noise. I know that is something that you guys hear on a daily basis, and I just wanted you to know that these are a lot of the things that are shared with us that were our motivation for creating this new hearing solution. We want to be able to give you something that can help you handle these typical objections that you might get from a patient that comes into your clinic.

So that is why I am very excited to introduce you to the Widex SmartRic. So I told you that we would talk about what we meant by working smarter, not harder to achieve natural sound. What we mean by that is that we have worked smarter, and these hearing aids work smarter, so that your patients and you don't have to work harder for them to be to hear better. And we're able upgrade it to the platform. We have new innovative hardware with a smarter approach to sound combined with the software from Widex that you have come to rely on. And that is why we can confidently say that Widex SmartRic is smarter by design. So what do we mean by smarter by design, or how is this product smarter by design, you might be wondering?

Well, like I said, it really was designed in order to help you handle those objections that you face every day in the clinic. Maybe your patients are complaining that the hearing aids are too noisy, or they're not performing well in background noise. Well, with SmartRic, we provide exceptional focus through Smart Sound and Smart Directionality. Or maybe battery life has been a concern in the past, their lithium-ions aren't meeting their standards after a couple years, there's frustration around that. Well, with SmartRic, we are able to provide ultimate convenience using Smart Power. Or maybe they just don't really like how a traditional Ric hearing aid looks. Well, don't worry, because SmartRic provides unparalleled aesthetics with smart design.

So first we're gonna unpack smart design a little bit and what we mean by unparalleled aesthetics. This hearing aid is really something that, it's got it all, it is hardware meets software meets design, it has this very sleek, and stylish, and modern look. It is definitely not what a patient would expect a prescription hearing aid to look like, but we know also that looks aren't everything, so we're gonna also talk about the measurable audiological benefits that this new design will provide your patients. So it really does have it all, look good, feel good, sound good, this hearing aid is all of the things. You can see here, the color palette that it comes in, and we know that attractive color palettes matter.

These colors were selected really carefully to really help convey that sophisticated, elegant, modern style that we're going for. And we're really excited to introduce the new rose gold. This hearing aid is absolutely beautiful in person, I can't wait for you to see it, but even the other hearing aid colors that you see here that we've had with previous products, they just look different on this design, as it's the angle or the shape, I'm not sure, but they all look very elegant and very sleek. I'm also excited to point out something that we have gotten many requests for, which is an LED indicator. So you can see it here, and it's just a really easy way for the patient to get confirmation that the hearing aid is turning on or that they've had a successful Bluetooth pairing.

There is also an option in the software to select if you want the status check to show continuously. So for a parent or for a caregiver that wants to easily be able to do a battery status check, that option is available. All right, so next we're gonna talk about Smart Power, because we've established that this hearing aid looks cool, but as we talked about, we need both form and function. Both of those things are very important to be able to provide a product that meets the needs of your patients. So let's unpack a little bit about what makes this solution so convenient. So with Smart Power, what we're excited to tell you guys about, not only is the hearing aid battery life, because it's phenomenal and it's the best that Widex has had yet for a lithium-ion rechargeable Ric, you can see 37 hours of use here on a single charge without streaming.

But that is even with streaming a full day, so eight hours of streaming, they still get 27 hours of use, which is really wonderful when you think about a patient that might be wanting to binge stream their favorite show on Netflix, they can do that all day and not even get a low battery indicator. Plus what we know about lithium-ion batteries is that they degrade over time. So the fact that we can overdeliver on battery life at the beginning means that we know we can still be meeting the needs of the patient even towards the end of their journey with this particular hearing aid. And not only is the hearing aid battery life amazing, but we're also really excited to launch our first portable charger.

So this is gonna be that compact, sleek, you can see here, easily fit-in-the-pocket of the patient, support of that on-the-go lifestyle, just like the hearing aid that's got that same stylish look and feel, and it really is very small and compact for how much charge it holds, which is able to provide the patient over a week of freedom. So what do I mean by that? Is that this little compact charger will hold five full hearing aid charges in it, which will give the patient over seven days of use before they need to plug into a

power source. Talk about ultimate convenience. Speaking of plugging into a power source, it does use a USB-C connection.

So again, convenient, almost everything is starting to use that these days, and we will be sending a USB-C cord as well as a wall plug with every single order that goes out. But not only that, I'm also excited to mention that we are able to wirelessly charge this charger, and you can kind of see by the way it sits there that it is very accessible to be able to charge it in either of those ways. I've got one of these charging pads in the console of my car it came with, I saw one on an airplane the other day, they're all over Amazon, so this is something that a patient might even already have in their house and it really does help this solution fit absolutely seamlessly into their everyday lives.

I mean, they could go years without ever having to plug this charger in, which is truly, ultimately convenient. We have created a handy dandy little quick guide for the charger, it just points out all the parts and pieces of it, gives the stats that I just went over with you, as well as the light indicators, and that is one of the supplemental documents that has been provided that Melissa was talking about. We also have them orderable from Widex, if you'd like to send them home with any of your SmartRic patients. All right, now let's focus on exceptional focus and what we mean by that. And there's kind of two different aspects of focus, with Smart Sound, we're talking about being able to focus because we're reducing distractions.

So you'll see here the improvements in wind noise and touch noise that we're able to provide with SmartRic. And then in a little bit when we're talking about Smart Directionality, that aspect of focus is the patient being able to focus more so on what they want to hear and being able to actually hear it better. So those are the two aspects that we're gonna unpack here. So when it comes to the reduction of wind and touch noise, that is possible with the new design of the hearing aid and the microphone cover and the microphone placement, that's what's going to be able to allow us to

have very meaningful reductions in those bothersome type of sounds that patients really don't want to hear.

How much improvement are we able to provide? I'm excited to share these big numbers with you, because with SmartRic, we are able to give patients up to a 20 dB reduction of wind noise and up to an 88% reduction in touch noise. So these are not insignificant numbers that we are able to talk about here and be able to allow the patient to experience. Things again, that are really just gonna make their everyday experience with their hearing aids even better. Now, when it comes to wind noise, there are two different ways as a manufacturer that we can help mitigate wind noise. One of them is digitally, and we have been doing that very well for a long time.

We've had SmartWind Manager in several generations of our technology and it is extremely effective, if you've ever fit a patient with it, you are well aware. It's very impressive that we're able to provide an 8.4 dB signal-to-noise ratio improvement. But now with the addition of SmartRic, we are able to not only have that digital answer to the wind noise problem, but now we can answer it mechanically as well. Meaning that with this new design and that up to 20 dB improvement in attenuation that we're able to provide, we are giving the patient the best of both worlds, because with the new design, that's gonna clean up the signal before it even gets into the hearing aid for processing.

So already we're delivering a cleaner signal into the hearing aid, then we have that amazing digital signal processing that's gonna come into play. So by the end when it comes to the output that the patient is actually hearing, it's the best offering possible. So we're really excited to be able to add to our already wonderful system with this new improvement as well. And then, again, related to the new microphone cover and the new micro array is that we are able to protect it more from touch noise that we know is bothersome to patients. So again, up to an 88% improvement or a reduction in touch

noise perception from patients. Both of these figures are from a Widex press that will be published next month.

So we will be able to share that when it is officially published. And then lastly with exceptional focus is Smart Directionality, and what I mean by that, again, is allowing the patients to focus more so on what it is they want to hear and be able to actually hear it better. And that is achieved by the groundbreaking L-shape. So when you first saw it, if you've seen it out on social media or in this presentation, you might have wondered, like why is it shaped that way? Well, again, not only does it look cool and look different from what a patient would expect a prescription hearing aid to look like, it also has those measurable audiological benefits that I mentioned previously, and we'll unpack that here in just a minute.

So what you can see here compared to a traditional Ric design is that this new design really changes the angle of the microphones and how they correspond to one another. So you can see with the traditional Ric, those microphones are more at an upward angle, whereas with this new L-shaped design, we are able to bring those microphones much more horizontal so they can be on that same plane with each other. Why that matters, it's actually pretty genius once you think about it, going back to kind of the fundamentals of sound and how directional microphones work, is that as an industry we actually already know that microphones that are at a more horizontal angle provide better directionality, and that better directionality is of course associated with better signal-to-noise ratio, which we know is correlated with better speech understanding in noise.

So it makes total sense that a hearing aid whose microphones are placed more horizontally will be able to improve directionality and signal-to-noise ratio. And we know how important that is, I'm sure you know how important that is, that as manufacturers we are fighting every day to find one dB here or there of SNR

improvement because of how much it can improve the patient experience when it comes to understanding in background noise. So what we know is that with every one dB of SNR improvement, that equates to about a 10 to 12% increase in speech understanding in noise. So of course, we wanted to test this, when we have this new microphone angle, what does that result in as far as patient performance will go?

So what we did, this is an internal study that was done by Dr. Francis Cook, you might be familiar with him, again, pending publication, so this will be available, it should be out next month. But what they were looking at, there were two different objectives to this study. So the first one is just a simple comparison of the microphone angles. How different is that angle from a traditional Ric design? In this case it was the Moment in Ric versus the new SmartRic, and that more horizontal angle there, what are those measured differences? And then what the second objective is, what is the impact of that on speech and noise performance? So looking at the first objective, just measuring the microphone angle, this graph kind of looks like there's a lot going on, but it's really very simple.

All it's showing here is that every single person that participated in this study saw an improvement in their microphone angles using the SmartRic. Now, when I say improvement, I mean we were able to lower the number, the angle, the degree, which is better, because that indicates it's going towards a more horizontal angle. So the lower the number, the better. You can see for some of these patients, it was a really significant change. The person up top that was at almost a 50 degree angle with a more traditional Ric design, with the SmartRic, came all the way down to below 10. So that is a huge difference. Even the average is a large change, the average difference with a traditional Ric was 37 degrees, and with a SmartRic was 12 degrees.

So again, really being able to bring those mics to a more horizontal angle. Now, of course, we also wanna test what does that mean for performance? And what we were

able to find is that with the SmartRic, that averaged in a 1.25 dB improvement in signal-to-noise ratio just from changing the angle of the microphones with this new design. And we know that corresponds to about a 12.5% improvement in speech understanding, just from the design of the hearing aid alone. And keep in mind that's just an average, we saw individual benefits of three, four, even five dB improvement in signal-to-noise ratio using the SmartRic. That is a game changer, a life changer for the patient.

That is somebody that is inviting you to their wedding, they are baking you all sorts of sweet treats and bringing them into your office. They're referring every single patient, every single person they know to you, because you've really made such a meaningful impact on their daily life and their ability to communicate. And what's really awesome is that all of these other core signature features of Widex that you have come to know and love are still there. The patient is still benefiting from all of our wonderful processing strategies, but with the addition of this new groundbreaking design of the hearing aid, that is how we can really confidently say that this is the best hearing aid that we have ever built, and providing those patients those real tangible audiological benefits.

And then lastly, I just wanted to talk to you about Smart Connection, because we know that hearing aids, as much as we always want it to be the silver bullet, alone, it can't be for every single patient, there are some patients that need more, and that's why we have this very thoughtful, intentional kind of ecosystem of products that are meant to really fit seamlessly into your patients' everyday lives. Now some of these might look familiar to you, obviously our TV Play, award-winning, everyone loves it. For control of the SmartRic, we've got the RC-DEX, the everyone loves Moment app, again, if this is a patient, maybe you're upgrading from an mRic into SmartRic, they don't have to learn a new app, you don't have to learn a new app, so that's exciting.

The two we're really gonna focus on here, since we only have 30 minutes together today, is a new accessory that's available from Widex called the SoundConnect, and then some new research on our beloved Sound Assist. So the SoundConnect is our solution for seamless computer audio streaming. And this little thing is awesome, it is small, it's discreet, you can see, you can't really tell here on a screen, but it's the same size as the Prolink adapter, if you're familiar with that. It just goes right into the patient's computer, once it's paired with the hearing aids, it's plug and play with the computer. So you stick it in there and it's gonna start streaming the computer audio directly into the patient's hearing aids, using our amazing sound quality as well as the same abilities to customize their streaming sound via the Moment app.

So they've got access to the sound mixer, they've got ear independent volume control, even the equalizer so that they can really customize that streaming sound to their liking. And then with Sound Assist, again, hopefully this is something that you are already familiar with, you've already fit patients with it, but there's some really exciting new evidence that I wanted to share with you on it. If you're not aware of what it does, this accessory basically does it all, it's kind of like the Swiss Army knife of accessories. So it's a remote microphone, you can use it for streaming, hands-free, it's got a telecoil, it even can be used for remote control. So it's really a six-in-one, like wonderful tool.

But what we're really gonna focus on today based on the new evidence that we're gonna talk about is its remote mic capabilities and effectiveness, both in the partner mic as well as the table mic conditions. So with the partner mic, what we found, again, a different study done by Francis Cook, was that we can achieve up to a 20 dB signal-to-noise ratio improvement. That is something, compared to a hearing aid alone, a hearing aid alone can never achieve that. Like I talked about earlier, we're excited every time we get a couple dB of SNR improvement. With this remote mic capability, we're providing an additional 20 dB signal-to-noise ratio improvement. That is at the three inch mark, so more like wearing it as like a lapel mic, but even at the furthest

distance that was tested, which is the longest setting of the lanyard, we were still able to achieve 11 dB signal-to-noise ratio improvement.

So again, super meaningful, super significant changes that can occur that can really have such a benefit to your patient in those everyday, more difficult listening situations, when you have a patient that really just does need a little bit more assistance in those harder to understand scenarios. And then with the table mic mode, again, super significant, we saw up to a 14 dB signal-to-noise ratio improvement, that was only at one foot. We know realistically, sometimes it's gonna be further away from the patient than that, so even at two and four feet you can see those numbers there, 11 and 6 dB signal-to-noise ratio improvements. And again, this is over what can be achieved with the hearing aid alone.

So just things to consider when you have those patients that need a little bit extra help, or in this case, a lot of extra help, we really do have a wonderful solution for that. All right, so hopefully you can see and feel why there's such excitement at Widex for the new SmartRic. I'm very excited for you to take what you've learned here back to your clinic, go talk to a patient about it this afternoon. And what I really love about this smarter by design product is that those benefits are tangible and they are easy to talk about. We know patients want to be able to perform better in noise. We know they don't like hearing things, like wind noise and touch noise.

We know that they want to have a life that's as convenient and as seamless as possible, and we don't want their hearing aids to get in the way of that. So by being able to provide that worry-free charging system, plus on top of that, having that sleek, cool, not your great grandpa's hearing aid type of look to it, this is something that we know is gonna be really easy for you to explain those benefits to your patient and something that they're going to be able to do really well with out there in the real world. I thank you so much, I know this was a very quick overview since we only have 30

minutes here today, but I do wanna thank you for taking 30 minutes of your time to be with me and learn about our new solution, the Widex SmartRic.

And with that, I think we have, it looks like about a minute, but I can also hang around a little bit longer if there are any questions that anyone has. Melissa, have we had anything come through?

- [Melissa] Yep, we do have a couple of questions here. The first one is, what performance levels is SmartRic available in?

- Absolutely, great question. We are launching at 440, 330, and 220. So you'll have the top three levels available to offer your patients. What else do you got for me?

- [Melissa] Are there new receivers or ear tips that needs to be stocked?

- Good news for you is that, again, going with that kind of ultimate convenience feel, not only for your patients but also for you, this is going to use our V2 receivers. So same that you've had, it will have the M and P receiver strength, not compatible with HP at the moment. And again, same ear tips too, so all of the mini dome options that we have available as well as custom molds. But there is one thing to consider, just due to the awesome battery that's contained in the hearing aid charger itself, there is a little bit less real estate in that receiver compartment than we've had before. So you just wanna be mindful of that, we've tested all sorts of different shapes and sizes of ear molds and they all fit, but we can't guarantee that every single ear canal shape and size will be able to be accommodated.

So it's just something you kind of have to take on a case-by-case basis. And that reminds me, there actually is one other thing I wanted to mention, due to the new design and the way this sits a little bit more forward on the ear, say it's an upgrade

patient, somebody that was in like a link to receiver previously, you might potentially want to go with a one size down for this hearing aid since it does sit a little bit differently on the ear there. So not a guarantee, but something that you don't wanna necessarily assume that what they had before is what you're gonna use again. So just something to keep in mind.

- [Melissa] Okay, great, and Lindsay, I think for sake of time I'm gonna go ahead and I'm gonna send you the rest of the questions that have come in

- Okay.

- [Melissa] for follow up. and for those of you that are here, thank you all for joining us, we are so happy that you were all able to be with us today. And Lindsay, thank you again.

- Absolutely, thank you for having me, and thank you guys for coming.