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Enhancing Connectivity: My Starkey App Updates

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All right. Hello everyone. Thanks for joining me today. I am Dr. Lawanda Chester. I am education and training audiologist with Starkey and I will be your host for this course.

Enhancing connectivity, going over the latest My Starkey App updates. So let's go ahead and get started. Before we do, I want to dive into just a little bit of housekeeping, some FAQ cues for you. So you are absolutely welcome to ask any questions about today's content. As I go through everything, you can click on the Q and A box, type in your question and hit send.

I will be waiting until the end of the course to address all questions, but feel free to type in questions as you think of them and I'll be sure to get to them at the end. We also have a handout available for you. The PDF of today's slides and presentation is available to you through your pending courses and also through the chat within the classroom. And then Also there are CEUs available for this course if you have a paid Audiology online unlimited CEU Access membership. So once you complete the course, you'll be asked to complete and pass a multiple choice quiz.

If you're able to do that, then you are able to receive those CEUs. And then finally, if you're having any technical difficulties, maybe you can't hear me or you're not seeing the slides, please feel free to reach out to Audiology online and they're more than happy to help you and get you connected again. We've got a couple of ways for you to contact them via the toll free number you see on your screen there. You also could email them as well. You can use one of the windows here in the classroom to get help and get you going again with the course.

Like I said, if you happen to have any technical difficulties, here are the risks and benefits associated with this course that we are required to show to you. And then also I want to review today's learning outcomes. At the end of today's course you will be able to identify two new features in the My Starkey mobile app. You will also gain a foundational understanding of oracast, including how one to many audio broadcasting works. And then our third learning outcome of the day is that you will be able to

describe how the Oracast assistant within my StarKey simplifies discovery, connection and management of ORACAST streams.

As a reminder, all the materials in our courses that we're using today are evidence based where appropriate.

So in the fast paced world of technology, connectivity is key. It's very important to all of our patients. It's important to us in our day to day lives. With the increasing number of devices that we use each day, the ability to seamlessly connect, pair and use technology has become pretty crucial not just for convenience, but for productivity, accessibility and inclusion. Reliable connectivity enhances the user experience and ensures that technology works together effortlessly to support how people live, work and communicate in an increasingly connected world.

So let's start with the most recent connectivity enhancements with my Starkey.

First, there is a new Android pairing enhancement available from Google. It's called Fast Pair and it's a technology developed by Google to make the pairing process easier and more efficient, eliminating the need for users to navigate through complicated menus and settings. Google Fast Pair simplifies Bluetooth connectivity for Android users, allowing for quick pairing of Bluetooth devices when they come in close proximity to each other. It utilizes Bluetooth flow energy to discover nearby devices. For example, when you hold a pair of true wireless earbuds near an Android phone, a prompt will appear to pair them automatically.

If you've ever used sort of Apple's devices with maybe their headsets, for example, you open up the headset and automatically it pops up on that iPhone, giving you the easy ability to pair. From my perspective, this is Google's answer to that seamless ability and it's pretty exciting that this is available. Now.

Let's look at this in how it might work with hearing aids. Fast Pair again uses a combination of Bluetooth and location services to detect nearby devices. So it will allow this feature to accurately detect when a compatible device is nearby and automatically initiate the pairing process. A notification will then show the device's name in picture, allowing the user to connect with the single tap. So as we saw here in this example, because this Google Fast Pair is exclusive to Omega AI devices, we saw a mega AI device pop up, we are able to quickly connect to it and now it's connected and it's telling us be done that it's done.

Please note that for Omega AI devices that are already in the field, you've already fit them. A firmware update is required in order to use this process, but pretty exciting and easy to use again without going through all those Bluetooth menus and things of that nature with those Android phones. So pretty great.

Now designed with the input of hearing aid wearers, My Starkey really helps patients enjoy greater listening moments, improve their well being and enjoy easier everyday living. With that in mind, we continue to add features that create a seamless experience, are easy to use, and provide convenience. Two new features that have been recently introduced in the My Starkey app include Push to Talk and oracast Assistant Instant. Let's take a look at those two features.

The first new feature available in My Starkey is Push to Talk. This feature allows a My Starkey user to connect to another My Starkey user to exchange voice notes. This feature is exclusive to Omega AI 24, our premium devices. Note that both individuals wanting to use Push to Talk feature would need to be wearing those Omega AI24 devices. To access the Push to Talk feature, you just navigate to the More menu from the menu bar on the home screen so the bottom right and then upon the first use, go ahead and push Push to Talk.

Upon the first use, the user will need to click Continue and add a contact. To do this, the user can either have the contact scan a QR code or they can share the code via text message or email. Once you click Add Contact, that would then add that user as your contact to be able to use that Push to Talk feature. Once your contact is set up, the user is able to send that contact voice notes. The contact name is visible at the top of the screen here, and to send a voice note, tap the microphone at the bottom of that Push to Talk screen.

Select View Voice Notes. If you select that, it allows you to see the voice notes as noted on the second screen here, which I'll show you here. There we go. Also on our Push to Talk screen is an Autoplay Notes option. If that slider is selected, Voice notes will autoplay through the hearing aids whenever they're received from the contact, so it's super easy there.

This will not interrupt things like phone calls and certain app features like our Fall Alert or Smart Assistant. If the user has Autoplay disabled, then they can click the notification when the voice note is received and click to play the message in their hearing aids whenever they want to listen to it. Now also, a really cool feature is with our Smart Assistant, a voice note may be triggered by activating that Smart Assistant and just saying the command Send message. A contact must be established prior to using that Smart Assistant voice command, so it knows to whom you want to send that message. And users can only have one contact at a time, but this provides a simple and really efficient way to send quick voice messages to a friend or loved one who's also wearing the Omega AI 24 hearing aids.

Now, before we talk about the next feature, let's take a quick step back and review a couple of things about Bluetooth technology in general. Now Bluetooth is used by Nearly all of us, most every single day. Yet very few people really understand what Bluetooth is. It's oftentimes an overarching umbrella term. And Bluetooth can be separated out to either Bluetooth Classic or Bluetooth Energy, because not all Bluetooth is the same.

Bluetooth, otherwise referred to as Bluetooth Classic, is a low power radio that streams Data in the 2.4 GHz frequency band. Bluetooth Classic has become the industry standard radio protocol for devices such as wireless speakers, headphones in car, entertainment systems, and so much more. Bluetooth Classic allows for wireless communication between two devices. In hearing aids, the stream signal is sent to one primary hearing aid and that input is then streamed to the other. So Bluetooth Connect Classic does not connect to both hearing aids at once.

Bluetooth Classic also allows for continuous wireless connection and it was primarily designed for data transfer, but it does support audio stream streaming. So although designed for relatively low power consumption for use in hearing aids, it can have a significant impact on battery life. Now, the second type of protocol is Bluetooth Low Energy. It was introduced in 2009. It was designed as an alternative to Bluetooth Classic with the priority of minimizing power consumption and maximizing battery life in wearable devices.

It offers the functionality of Bluetooth but with low power demands, making it ideal for small devices like hearing aids with limited battery life. It also allows devices to connect over shorter distances and transfer small amounts of data. Bluetooth Low Energy includes Apple's proprietary Lea and Lea 2 protocols, Android's Ostra protocol, and every hearing aid manufacturer has their own proprietary Bluetooth Low Energy protocol for connection with the various accessories. Now we all know there have been some limitations with the current Bluetooth Low Energy streaming protocols, including poor range compatibility issues with some phones and that features like two way audio was only supported on some devices and not all devices, and that hearing aids haven't always maintained a consistent pairing with wearer's phones. That's just some of the downsides of this Bluetooth Low Energy audio protocol, and I'm sure these sound very familiar to everyone here today.

So as a result of these known issues, the Bluetooth Special Interest Group developed a new protocol called LE Audio, which is a Bluetooth Low energy protocol, but it differs somewhat from the protocols used previously. Now, specifications for that LE Audio were released in 2020. Although devices compatible with LE Audio are just beginning to come on the market.

Starkey's approach to connectivity has always been you know what, future forward. So in 2024, Starkey began using the LE Audio, Bluetooth streaming protocol in our devices, which consumed less power and delivered the next generation assistive listening technology. So we first introduced it in our Edge AI product. Using the LE Audio protocol allows our devices to pair more easily, connect more quickly, and stream more robustly from multiple devices. LE Audio allows users to not only connect with unicast devices, but it also opens up the ability to use AuraCast technology.

Let's take a moment and define unicast versus broadcast.

Now, we are all very familiar with the concept of Unicast, even if you haven't heard that particular term before. This is essentially what we've been using with our smartphones. It enables direct streaming from electronic devices. And this LE Audio protocol that's newer allows for connectivity to a wider range of personal electronic devices with improved wireless range and streaming sound quality. Excuse me, a wider range.

Okay. So this allows us to have that one to one connection between, say, your Windows 11 PC and your hearing aids, or a tablet and your hearing aids, as well as, say, a phone, for example.

Now, AuraCast is a broadcast signal. It's an exciting, exciting component of LE Audio technology that opens up a lot of great opportunities for accessibility for hearing aid wearers. AuraCast allows a single audio source to broadcast sound to an unlimited number of nearby devices. So instead of individual Bluetooth pairing, users can simply select and tune in to a broadcast from a transmitter using what is

called an ORACAST assistant, which is ideal for shared audio experiences or public spaces like theaters, airports and gyms.

For this process, an AuraCast transmitter begins broadcasting, which provides AuraCast assistance with information about the broadcast, i.e. their name or their configuration, the content, et cetera.

ORACAST assistants can scan for ORACAST broadcasts. They provide a user interface to enable users to select an oracast broadcast to join, similar to how you might connect to WI FI networks in public spaces. So your oracast assistant will do that search, give you a list of oracast broadcasts in the area, and you tap on the one you want to join.

Now, once an oracast broadcast is selected, the oracast assistant provides that receiver, whether it's your headphones, your hearing aids, earbuds, etc. The information it needs to join that Oracast broadcast and then begin receiving that signal, hearing that broadcast.

So now this takes us to the second feature I want to tell you about.

So to help our hearing aid wearers easily connect with AuraCast broadcasts that they might encounter, Starkey have introduced an OraCast assistant within the My Starkey app. This allows the HearnaTE user to select the OraCast stream they want to listen to on their mobile device. Just like selecting a WI FI hotspot. The oracast assistant feature is exclusive to Omega AI and Edge AI with a firmware update.

Here's how it works. So open up your AuraCast assistant. You would select the streaming options icon on the bottom of the home screen to get to that Oracast assistant and then select AuraCast Broadcast. This will start a search for available broadcasts. Available broadcasts will be separated into two different, excuse me, two different categories, supported and unsupported.

Supported broadcasts are the broadcasts that support hearing aid streaming. Unfortunately, not all oracast broadcasts will support hearing aids streaming. It's likely rare. But those broadcasts that do not support hearing aid streaming will be listed in the unsupported section. We want to make sure that users are aware of that.

So in case you're trying to stream to your hearing aids and the person next to you is able to stream to their wireless earbuds, you can see that that particular AuraCast broadcast, that's a tongue tire, isn't it? Tongue. Tongue tied there. That oracast broadcast is not supported for hearing aid streaming.

Now, once the list of available broadcast populates completely, then you can select the broadcast, the supported broadcast that is that you would like to join.

So in this example, we've looked at our oracast broadcast. We see that there's International Airport broadcasts and there's also a broadcast nearby from Jane's Coffee Shop. I'll note that Jane's Coffee Shop has a little lock icon there that lets you know that it's passcode or password protected. So again, think of those WI FI signals you want to want to patch into, but they're password protected. You choose the broadcast that you want.

So in this example, we're going to choose International Airport.

From here. This is the page for that International Airport broadcast. We see the name at the top if that broadcast is available in multiple languages. We see English there, but you could tap there if other languages are available and hear that broadcast in other languages. If available, you have a quick, easy way to stop and start the stream in the center.

So right now it's playing. So we see the stop icon. I think of stop more as a pause because you hit stop, but it doesn't mean you've disconnected. You're still connected to that particular broadcast. You've just

paused that streaming.

If you truly want to disconnect that broadcast, then you would need to select Disconnect Broadcast in the center of the screen. Now, if I have Chosen to pause or stop that broadcast. And then I go back to my home screen. There we go. We see on the left that we have, excuse me, if I haven't stopped the broadcast.

The broadcast is playing and I go back to the home screen. What we see is our streaming audio screen on the home screen. It's a nice clear way that my starkey lets the user know that it's receiving streamed input, right? So we can see from that streaming audio screen we're receiving that streamed input. We have the ability to make adjustments to that sound if I want to.

So if I tap adjust sound, I would then see my equalizer and I can give myself more bass or more treble or more mids, for example, on the bottom of that screen, underneath my volume buttons, underneath my volume sliders, that's the word I'm looking for. We have international airport. So it's showing me what oracast broadcast. I'm listening. And I have the option to start and stop that stream right there from the home screen.

If I did stop the stream. Remember, we're not disconnected, but our home screen goes back to our standard home screen. Look shows me what program I'm on, which is the personal program. And I still see that bar on the bottom that shows me what our oracast broadcast were connected to. And I have the option to play it again from there.

All right, so one thing I'll mention is we do have our TV streamer accessory that's one of our accessories. And do note it's essentially an oracast transmitter and allows an unlimited number of users to connect. So it would show up here as well when it's in use. Just as a side note, now here are a few good to knows about our AuraCast assistant. The user cannot scan for broadcasts when they are

actively streaming a broadcast.

So they'd have to stop the streaming and then search for a new broadcast. Also note that when we say actively streaming, that does include TV and phone calls. So if I'm on a phone call or I am streaming from my TV streamer, I can't open up that oracast broadcast, excuse me, that oracast assistant, and get it to start searching for an oracast stream for me. Also, like I mentioned that broadcasts can be password protected. As we saw in that example a moment ago.

If a broadcast is password protected, that like lock icon will appear next to the broadcast in the search list and then it will only allow you, those who have the password to join. If a broadcast is password protected, there will be a pop up asking for the password. Again, similarities to how you may sign on to a WI fi you enter the password to connect. The ORCAS assistant cannot verify the password unless audio is actively streaming from the transmitter. So for example, if a hearing aid wearer went to a theater where the audio signal hasn't actually started yet, but they entered the password to join the broadcast, the broadcast would not be able to be verified.

They'd have to wait until the signal has started. Now, the data transfer that contains that password validation is only there when there's an active audio stream, like I said. So this is likely rare that you'll encounter that as most public places would likely not be password protected. But it's important to note as it is a possibility for users to encounter.

All right, now for your reference we have included a glossary of AuraCast terms. These should sound familiar to most audiologists. So what a transmitter is what a receiver might be. Remember, your Bluetooth device is the receiver that might be your Omega AI hearing aids or it might be a headset. That oracast assistant is that Bluetooth device capable of assisting that receiver in connecting and receiving an ORACAST broadcast.

That oracast broadcast is that broadcast signal allowing that connection between one transmitter and multiple and usually an unlimited number of receivers that then streams and associates streams to those receivers. A stream, of course, is that electronic audio signal that goes to various devices and then something that I didn't mention, but you may see oracast advertisement. It's a defined set of Bluetooth advertising messages that alert AuraCast assistance to the present content and configuration of an ORACAST broadcast. So it's not like the marketing advertisements that we think of. It's basically a way to let ORACAST assistants in the vicinity know that there is an available broadcast and the information about that broadcast.

So when patients do want to interact with their hearing aids, it's to connect them to their smartphones, accessories or other streaming devices. And Omega AI makes that intuitive and easy for the for the user. It starts with Bluetooth Low Energy Audio LE Audio and it just helps everything just connect easily, reliably and it offers numerous benefits including improved sound quality, synchronized audio streaming, aura cast compatibility, low power consumption, and even more.

Now, all of the materials I've, you know, gone over involving Bluetooth and Bluetooth Low Energy etc are available for your reference out there. But I want to say that some really good resources we found a lot of information are on these two websites. The second one is [bluetooth.com](https://www.bluetooth.com) so it is the website from the Bluetooth Special Interest Group that really puts a lot of information out there on Bluetooth Low Energy on OraCast and one of my favorite things is it's a way it has a resource there as far as ORACAST goes, where you can find ORACAST devices, you can find what's out there in the public already. And also I was speaking to someone recently who wanted to help her local theater get set up with AuraCast in her community and there's great resources on [Bluetooth.com](https://www.bluetooth.com) that sort of helps you with that type of thing as well.

We also have some resources regarding Starkey and Omega AI family on StarkeyPro.com we have various white papers, quick tips which are easy step by step guides on how to do various things in the software or how to pair accessories, etc. Lots of videos and additional training opportunities. So hopefully you'll be able to find everything you need on starkeypro.com if not, absolutely feel free to reach out to your Starkey representative or if you know your Starkey trainer. Thank you so much for your time and attention. I'm going to check and see if we have any open questions.

Okay? It does not look as if we do so. Again, I appreciate your attending. I hope you found this helpful and pretty exciting out there. What's going on with connectivity and hopefully we're going to see Aura cast more and more in our local communities.

Thanks everyone and I hope you have a great rest of your day.