

BAA President Blog – 5th October 2020

I write this overlooking over Loch Lomond, taking a break from work this coming week. I hope you all have had that chance to step out for a short while and take care of yourselves. As we stated at the beginning of this pandemic, it is important to look after our mental as well as our physical wellbeing and this is still very true.

On Friday last week I attended the Hearing Alliance meeting representing BAA. The focus is on telehealth. The Alliance is putting a paper together to advocate for accessibility for everyone, especially those with hearing and sight loss, when having to use online or telephone consultations for health and for other meetings. We need to ensure that technologies are in place to help those using telehealth (including assistive devices). For those who cannot use these technologies, we must make sure they are not disadvantaged and limited in accessing health and social care.

We also spoke about clear face masks. My service received them last week. They are effective for lipreading (when they do not steam up – lots of advice out there around preventing the steaming). My concern is that they are single use and we could only get hold of 20. This gives us a significant dilemma, and we will have to limit the use at present for those patients who need to lipread.

Since being on holiday, I have realised much more how difficult it is to hear with masks and how much speech sounds are lost. This was especially difficult when out for a meal (first time in months) and misheard what the waitress had said about the menu (background noise not helping). It was interesting when the food arrived, but I will not go there. I really feel the frustration for those who have hearing loss in these situations.

We really need to consider this long term – what do you feel we should campaign for to help all our patients? Assistive devices are not funded in the NHS and this is one of the things the Hearing Alliance have been talking about.

Finally, I hope you watch the ‘Conference week’ video. It is inspired and I hope it makes you smile – I have watched it a few times and I smile every time. Thank you to Claire and Victoria for putting this together. I shall be campaigning for a Billy bear soft toy.

Take care

Kath Lewis