

August 3, 2025

## **Hearing Loss Advocacy in a Hospital or Medical Office**

Well, not really an opinion but seeking some discussion.

First, some background. For several years now I have advocated hearing loops in health care scenarios. I have successfully spearheaded the installation of hearing loops in Sarasota Memorial Hospital in Venice Florida in every department (It is now the only hospital in the state that is fully accessible to hearing aid and cochlear implant users who have a telecoil). In addition, all ten walk-in emergency clinics are now equipped with hearing loops. How many are functional is another issue and as hearing aid manufacturers are eliminating telecoils in anticipation of Auracast means there will be a gap for several years to come.

As I posted two weeks ago, I had a trip and fall and landed on a cement driveway face first. It was my first visit to the emergency room in decades. (Yes, I had eye surgery, and my sight is sloooowly coming back).

What has changed is the use of cell phones. Every doctor and tech were using the phone to do diagnostics or take directions for protocol. Every single one.

I think we can agree that the cell phone has shifted the paradigm in our lives in so many ways. This led me to consider the role the patient takes for their own advocacy. We have spent decades demanding compliance with the ADA. In many cases successfully and in others, especially for accommodations for hearing loss, it is still a struggle. Our invisible disability simply makes it harder for others to understand.

When HLAA was started back in the late 1970s, it was originally called SHHH or Self Help for the Hard of Hearing. SELF HELP was the key to making our own way. ADA shifted the responsibility to the government and others. It was never entirely effective because non-compliance was not attached to a financial penalty but to cure.

But on reflection, we now have our phones to be the tools for self-help. Live Transcribe or any other voice to text assures us we understand the doctor or technician. AI gives us access to medical information that they might be too harried to explain.

I would welcome some conversation and opinions about returning to more self-help rather than depending on others.

Your thoughts?