INSPIRING HOPE THROUGH AWARENESS, RELIEF, AND RESEARCH

AMERICAN TINNITUS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL REPORT FY20
OUR COMMUNITY

The American Tinnitus Association (ATA) is a nonprofit organization that:

1. **Promotes relief** from tinnitus.
2. **Helps prevent** tinnitus.
3. **Funds research** to find cures for tinnitus.

All activities are guided by our core values of compassion, credibility and responsibility.

OUR HISTORY

The tinnitus community began with two visionaries – Charles Unice, MD, and Jack Vernon, PhD – who understood the need and power of community organization to tackle tinnitus, a poorly understood condition that impacts millions of people. By cofounding the ATA in 1971, they created a critical hub for raising awareness of tinnitus and money for research into an overlooked disorder.

Over the course of 50 years, the ATA has kick-started research that yielded new treatments, breakthroughs in scientific understanding of tinnitus, and evidence-based guidelines for meaningful patient care.

Every day, your donations provide support for individuals with tinnitus and researchers committed to finding cures and better treatments for tinnitus patients.
MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to people with tinnitus.

We rely on your support to help individuals and families cope, fund research, advocate for better care, and provide trustworthy information to thousands of people every day.

This year began with the announcement of our 2021 Innovative Research Grant Program, aimed at advancing new research into potential cures and enhanced treatments for tinnitus. How were we to know that a pandemic would hit, shuttering laboratories and sending people into isolation in a global effort to contain Covid-19?

Due to the negative impact of sudden isolation on people with tinnitus, we ramped up communication with ATA members, sending out steps on managing stress in uncertain times. For the global community, we opened access to the Spring issue of Tinnitus Today magazine, Tinnitus in a Time of Chaos: Calming the Mind, to provide people with actionable guidance on tinnitus management, including finding help online.

We also expanded our Tinnitus Advisors Program (TinnAp™) – a team of seven audiologists experienced in tinnitus management – to advise people calling our support line. We also helped researchers conduct online investigations by drawing on our extraordinary patient network.

Our ongoing efforts were rewarded by an unexpected and extraordinary bequest that will provide a steady income stream to help the tinnitus community for years to come.

As we mark our 50th year in 2021, we hope we can count on you – as a member, donor, or volunteer – to continue your support, which enables the ATA to support individuals with tinnitus and researchers.

Torryn Brazell, MS, CMP, CAE
Chief Executive Officer
The ATA improves the lives of people with tinnitus and sustains innovative researchers through your gifts, which enable us to fund seed grants; and raising awareness of tinnitus, its impact and how to prevent it. All activities are guided and informed by the needs of the tinnitus patient.

**SEED GRANT RESEARCH**

Your gifts have funded ATA seed grant research for 35 years, totaling more than $6 million, which averages to more than $170,000 per year for grants. That is a significant amount of money for a nonprofit funded almost entirely by individuals. Most importantly, these funds have fueled cutting-edge ideas, enabling researchers to test ideas to generate data needed for applying for larger funding from such agencies as the National Institutes of Health and U.S. Department of Defense.

**RECENT RESEARCH BY ATA-FUNDED SCIENTISTS**

Susan Shore, PhD, made national headlines in 2018 with groundbreaking research that showed the positive effects of bimodal stimulation as a potential tinnitus treatment. The preliminary study found that bimodal stimulation, which calms neurons using timed multisensory stimulation, reduces tinnitus distress and loudness. Her research reflects 20 years of painstaking work and the impact of ATA seed grants.

Shaowen Bao*, PhD, and Jinsheng Zhang**, PhD, and colleagues released findings in 2019 that revealed a link between brain inflammation and tinnitus. They found that inflammation in a sound-processing region of the brain triggered evidence of tinnitus in mice with noise-induced hearing loss. Their research demonstrated that inhibiting inflammation in the brain after noise exposure may curb the onset of tinnitus, which could pave the way to targeted interventions to reverse/prevent tinnitus.

*ATA funded in 2008.
**ATA funded in 2005.

Fan-Gang Zeng, PhD, and colleagues investigated a common complaint among tinnitus patients that the sounds of tinnitus interferes in the ability to understand other people speaking. Using an attentional normalization model, his data showed that tinnitus does not in fact impact hearing and understanding of speech. The findings are critical for treating tinnitus patients and addressing other issues that might be interfering with speech understanding, such as hearing loss.


Sarah Theodoroff, PhD, investigated a modified Categorical Loudness Scale, a cutting-edge behavioral method of measuring loudness perception, to assist in the clinical evaluation of hyperacusis, which is present among 60 to 79 percent of tinnitus patients. Her research revealed behavioral evidence for an alternative approach to measuring loudness perception in a manner that minimizes the risk of exacerbating decreased sound tolerance symptoms. Her ATA-funded research was recommended for further funding by a larger agency.

*ATA funded in 2016.
PROMOTING TINNITUS AND HEARING HEALTH: EARS

EDUCATION
Tinnitus Today magazine, Conversations in Tinnitus podcasts, and the ATA website provide the most comprehensive overview of credible information on tinnitus and its management. Our guidance is informed by the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery Foundation’s Clinical Practice Guideline: Tinnitus. We encourage all tinnitus patients to work with qualified healthcare professionals and seek support from individuals who understand the toll of tinnitus on daily life.

ADVOCACY
The ATA engages regularly with the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), a major funder of tinnitus research. We provide input to governmental agencies, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, on the negative impact of tinnitus on patients. The ATA is also a member of the Friends of the Congressional Hearing Health Caucus, a bipartisan U.S. House of Representative caucus that raises awareness of hearing health issues that affect millions of people in the United States.

RESEARCH
In January, prior to the pandemic, the ATA partnered with the British Tinnitus Association to host the Tinnitus and Big Data networking dinner, underwritten fully by Neuromod Devices, Ltd. Approximately 50 researchers and other leading members of the tinnitus community gathered to talk about research activities, opportunities to collaborate, and hear presentations on the utilization of big data to advance tinnitus research. Throughout this fiscal year, we have supported numerous researchers in the collection of online data by utilizing our vast patient network.
YOUR SUPPORT MEANS EVERYTHING

The Tinnitus Advisors Program (TinnAP™) is a donor-funded resource providing meaningful guidance to anyone in the U.S. who contacts us for help. The free program is underwritten by your donations to ensure that individuals receive immediate help and develop a plan for short- and long-term management of their tinnitus. Support groups – in-person and online – are fostered by the ATA to provide a save and supportive space for talking about tinnitus. Our volunteer peer-to-peer network provides telephone and email support for people needing to talk with someone who understands the challenges of living with tinnitus.

PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT

To help people struggling with tinnitus connect with others living with it, the ATA fosters 28 national support groups that sustain a nurturing environment. Each group is independent and operates somewhat differently, with the shared goal of open communication based on compassion, understanding, and facts, not fear.

As weeks turned into months of quarantining, more and more groups shifted to online meetings. At the end of 2020, 16 groups were hosting Zoom meetings joined by regular members and new ones from various states and abroad.

For those living in areas without a support group or stable internet access, the ATA maintains a volunteer peer-to-peer network with more than 130 people with tinnitus who answer calls or emails.

If you or a loved one would benefit from connecting with a support group, visit https://www.ata.org/managing-your-tinnitus/support-network for details. If you would like to join the peer-to-peer volunteer network or start a support group, call 800-634-8978, ext. 2.

DONALD BOWMAN BEQUEST

Donald Bowman believed in the ATA’s mission and work helping the tinnitus community.

Mr. Bowman first started donating to the ATA in 1982. Thanks to his foresight and generosity, the ATA is able to fund additional research and programs that help people struggling with tinnitus.

In his honor, the ATA has created the annual Donald Bowman Innovation in Tinnitus Research Grant in appreciation of his faith in us and science.
The ATA Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) is made up of the best and brightest researchers and clinicians from around the world who have an intimate understanding of patient needs and interests. This dedicated group is an instrumental part of fulfilling our mission core tenants of relief, prevention, and research of tinnitus. We offer our sincere appreciation for their commitment to research, education, and improving your future.

**Michael E. Hoffer, MD, FACS**  
Chair  
University of Miami Health System  
Miami, FL

**Carey D. Balaban, PhD**  
University of Pittsburgh  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Shaowen Bao, PhD**  
University of Arizona  
Tucson, AZ

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Nottingham, United Kingdom

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University College London  
London, England

**Grant D. Searchfield, PhD**  
University of Auckland  
Auckland, New Zealand

**Jeremy G. Turner, PhD**  
Illinois College, Turner Scientific  
Jacksonville, IL

**Richard Tyler, PhD**  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, IA

**Fan Gang-Zeng, PhD**  
University of California, Irvine  
Irvine, CA
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The ATA Board of Directors is comprised of members representing the tinnitus community: patients with tinnitus, researchers, and healthcare providers. The inclusion of each segment ensures that the ATA pursues activities that advance patient interests, from improving interactions and outcomes with healthcare providers to funding research aimed at yielding better treatments and possible cures. Each director is a steward for ATA activities and represents a voice for patient empowerment.

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Jinsheng Zhang, PhD  
Detroit, MI

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Honorary Director  
Los Angeles, CA
MEANINGFUL SUPPORT AND CHANGE: OUR PROGRAMS

TINNITUS ADVISORS PROGRAM

Our Tinnitus Advisors Program (TinnAP™) provides meaningful and effective guidance from a qualified healthcare professional well versed in tinnitus management, including the psychological challenges of tinnitus distress and anxiety.

The free 15-minute consultation educates the caller on research-based guidelines for tinnitus treatment and management, immediate self-help strategies, and how to find local healthcare professionals who can help.

The TinnAP provides life-changing advice and empowers those who’ve almost always been told incorrectly that “there’s nothing that can be done about tinnitus.” The TinnAP operates daily helping individuals on the phone and via email to ensure that no one is left struggling alone.

If you or someone you know would benefit from speaking with an advisor, call 800-634-8978, ext. 3. The service is free to the public, however audiologists are paid by the ATA for their time.

“I donated today because of your (Tinnitus Advisors) program. The person I spoke to was extraordinarily helpful. Whoever thought of creating this program was extraordinarily generous and kind.”

—Mark O.
2020 DONORS

Because of supporters like you, the ATA is able to fund research for better treatments and cures, advocate for tinnitus awareness and further funding of tinnitus research, and help individuals struggling with tinnitus.

Thank you for your generosity and belief that tinnitus can be managed and eventually cured. Link-to-donor-list.com

THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON YOU

The ATA is almost exclusively funded by individuals, such as yourself, who enable us to support researchers and patients, as well as raise awareness of tinnitus among the public, federal agencies, and healthcare providers. All of our activities are linked directly to your ongoing donations and our mission to prevent, provide relief, and eliminate tinnitus.
CINDY’S STORY

“…I shut myself off from the rest of the world … I scoured the internet in search of a cure. What I ended up with were (ATA) patient stories – many, many patient stories – with one unifying theme: The power of the mind… Finally, there was a day when everything clicked. Everything I had read … became my truth.”

PROMOTING AWARENESS OF TINNITUS & HEARING HEALTH

TINNITUS TODAY MAGAZINE

Tinnitus Today magazine – the only U.S. publication dedicated to covering tinnitus news – represents the many voices of the tinnitus community, from individuals with tinnitus to researchers working to find cures or better treatments.

We showcase the latest in tinnitus research, tools for everyday management of tinnitus, treatments, and critical topics of concern to the community overall. For instance, when the coronavirus pandemic hit, we released the Spring issue, Tinnitus in a Time of Chaos: Calming the Mind, free-of-charge to the international community in an effort to circulate useful resources for people struggling with tinnitus while in quarantine or on the job under stressful circumstances. The decision was guided by the ATA’s mission to provide meaningful relief and guidance informed by science and compassion.

CONVERSATIONS IN TINNITUS PODCASTS

Through our podcasts, we bring you the researchers – at home and abroad – who are paving the way in tinnitus management, unraveling the pathophysiology of tinnitus, and investigating possible cures. The audiologist co-hosts speak to researchers in a conversational style that gives listeners a unique view into this extraordinary world, which serves as a beacon of hope among those with tinnitus. The podcasts are open access and can be found on our website, www.ATA.org. Transcripts are available to aid listening comprehension.
In fiscal year 2020, the ATA received an extraordinary gift of $3,496,759. The prior three years saw an average giving of $700,000 per year, which illustrates the impact of this single gift.

Here are some of the highlights:

Total Income
$3,562,683

Individual Donor and Foundation Gifts
$564,621

Investment Income
$33,990

Service Revenue and Other Income
$41,934

Member Dues
$135,439

Donald Bowman Bequest
Long-Term Investment Account
$2,786,693

Investment Income
$33,990

Fundraising
$174,089

Program Services
$321,254

Management and General
$244,181

Management and General
$244,181

Total Expense
$739,524

Net Income
$2,823,159
To learn more about tinnitus and how the ATA can help you, please scan here.