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The Sound of Silence

February 22, 2011 - Imagine you've just laid down to sleep for the night and you hear the buzz of a mosquito in your room. The sound is too distracting to ignore, so you cover your head with your pillow to drown out the buzz, but it doesn't help. The sound is in your head. You turn on the television to mask the sound, but the soft buzz still overpowers the voices on TV. Now imagine this distracting background buzz happens, not one night, but every night. And sometimes during the day too!

The buzzing or ringing in the ears is known as tinnitus. It can also sound like hissing, roaring, pulsing, whooshing, chirping, whistling or clicking. It may be soft or loud, high pitched or low pitched, and it can occur in either one or both ears.

The alarming part is that an estimated 50 million people cannot escape this subjective noise. For roughly 12 million people, tinnitus is severe enough to seek medical help.

Though there is no cure, Columbus Speech & Hearing Center Audiologists can help find a way to manage tinnitus. Because tinnitus affects each person differently, there are multiple possible ways to address the issue. For example the Neuromonics device is worn for a couple hours each day and it delivers an acoustic stimulus that is embedded in relaxing music. Another option is the Widex Mind hearing aid, which is a new product for patients with a hearing loss in addition to the tinnitus.

Silence is golden! No one wants the distraction of tinnitus to interrupt their daily activities. If you struggle with tinnitus or a hearing loss, have your hearing tested by an audiologist. To schedule an appointment, e-mail hearing@columbusspeech.org or call 614.261.5452.

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CSHC audiologists and patients with tinnitus are available for interviews by contacting Susan Slater at 614-261-5417 or sslater@columbusspeech.org.

Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, founded in 1923, is a non-profit United Way organization serving over 10,000 people annually. Services include hearing evaluations, hearing aids, speech therapy for children and adults, occupational therapy and treatment, and vocational services for the Hard-of-Hearing, Deaf and Deaf-Blind through the Comprehensive Program for the Deaf and Ohio Deaf-Blind Outreach Program. Generous charitable giving from the community helps offset the cost of the Center's valued services. For more information, www.columbusspeech.org.