



# HYPERACUSIS RESEARCH

Stop Noise-Induced Pain

Donor Newsletter

Volume 12, Spring 2026

## Letter from Michael Maholchic



*Michael Maholchic,  
Outgoing President,  
Hyperacusis Research*

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As my term as president of Hyperacusis Research comes to a close, I am deeply grateful for your unwavering support and dedication. Together we have built a vibrant community and advanced our mission to increase awareness and drive research for loudness and pain hyperacusis. 2025 was a very successful year — we raised \$120,815 for research.

Since our founding, we have sponsored 13 Emerging Research Grants in partnership with [Hearing Health Foundation](#) (HHF). This year, we funded two grants:

- **Manoj Kumar, Ph.D.** (University of Pittsburgh) demonstrated promising results in mice with tinnitus and hyperacusis using a drug analog currently in preclinical research.
- **Bshara Awwad, Ph.D.** (Harvard Medical School) is investigating brain circuits to identify new therapeutic targets for hyperacusis and other sound sensitivity disorders.

We are grateful for HHF's rigorous scientific review process and the invaluable advice and support from **Timothy Higdon** and HHF's staff.

- Their efforts secured a large matching grant, potentially providing up to \$1,000,000 for pain and loudness hyperacusis research.
- The [Summer 2025 issue](#) of Hearing Health magazine was devoted almost entirely to hyperacusis and tinnitus.

- Our fundraising pizza parties have brought together caregivers, friends, and those affected by hyperacusis, strengthening our cause.

I extend special thanks to our Scientific Advisory Board, especially **Iver Juster, M.D.**, **Megan Beers Wood, Ph.D.**, **Kelly Jahn, Ph.D.**, and **Catherine Weisz, Ph.D.** We welcome our newest member, **James Henry, Ph.D.**, author of *The Hyperacusis and Misophonia Book: When Everyday Sounds Are Too Loud, Distressing, or Painful*, with a foreword by board member **David Treworgy**.

Our ongoing participation in the midwinter meeting of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology (ARO) connects our patient community with nearly 2,000 researchers and clinicians, fostering collaboration and inspiring new research directions.



*Steven Barad, MD,  
Incoming President,  
Hyperacusis Research*

As I step down, I am delighted to announce that my friend, **Steve Barad, M.D.**, will lead us into the next chapter. I remain committed to serving on the executive board and supporting our shared mission.

I am confident that, by working together, we will maintain our momentum. Our organization is well-positioned for future success, thanks to our talented volunteers and generous donors. Thank you for being part of our journey. With your continued support, we will make a lasting difference for those living with hyperacusis.

*Michael Maholchic*

## Research Webinar and Fall Fundraiser

In October, we hosted a Research Webinar via Zoom featuring Dr. James Henry, Dr. Megan Beers Wood, and Dr. Thanos Tzounopolous. The level of interest was tremendous, with over 400 people registered. If you missed the event, you can watch a replay on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/bKR4A0zY3uI>

The Research Webinar kicked off our Fall Fundraiser. Our goal was to raise \$50,000. A generous matching donor agreed to match every dollar up to \$50,000, for a total of \$100,000. We are thrilled to report that 87 people donated a total of \$53,048, exceeding our goal. Adding the \$50,000 matching contribution, we raised \$103,048, which will fund a new research grant.

If you have not yet had a chance to donate, or would like to invite friends or family to help support finding a cure for hyperacusis, you can donate at our GoFundMe page <https://gofund.me/9cddf8e30>. As always, all contributions are fully tax-deductible as allowed by law. Thank you!

## Hyperacusis Research Supports 2026 Research Grant

Along with our partner [Hearing Health Foundation](#), we have funded an exciting Emerging Research Grant for 2026. We are grateful for the donor support that makes this grant possible. The grant went to Bshara Awwad, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School.



*Bshara Awwad, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School and Mass Eye and Ear*

Dr. Awwad, a Postdoctoral Fellow, will be researching auditory-limbic circuit dynamics as therapeutic targets in hyperacusis. He seeks to determine which brain circuits drive the heightened sound sensitivity

and negative valence bias in hyperacusis; test whether targeted stimulation at 40 Hertz can restore more normal sound processing; and explore whether measurable physiological responses, such as pupil changes, correlate with symptom severity. Read more here: <https://hyperacusisresearch.org/2026-hyperacusis-research-grant-awarded-to-bshara-awwad/>

## Dr. Kelly Jahn: “Pain hyperacusis is a crippling condition.”

We interviewed one of our scientific advisors, Kelly Jahn, Au.D., PhD, of The University of Texas at Dallas, who recently published two papers on hyperacusis: One on audiologists’ lack of knowledge and one on the patient experience.



*Kelly Jahn, Ph.D., University of Texas at Dallas*

Audiologists reported five hours — at most — of hyperacusis education in their doctoral programs. Few knew it involved pain and some actually thought it was a mental-health condition.

“It was eye-opening for us to learn that every single patient felt a lack of empathy and support from healthcare professionals, suggesting that the way the condition is approached in the clinic may be detrimental to their well-being,” she said. “We do not yet have strong scientific evidence for interventions that specifically target pain hyperacusis or proper recommendations for ear protection or sound avoidance in this population.”

Her research also showed a lack of understanding from family and friends. “If providers can demonstrate empathy and validate the patient’s lived experience, this will go a long way in legitimizing the condition and showing others how complex and life-altering it can be.”

## Dr. Marsha Johnson: “The pain is severe and incapacitating.”

Marsha Johnson, Au.D., opened the Oregon Tinnitus & Hyperacusis Treatment Clinic in 1997. She was one of the first clinicians to recognize pain and loudness hyperacusis as distinct conditions. In an interview with us, she noted that audiological testing can further injure patients, that sound therapy makes pain patients worse, and that parents and teachers sometimes work against young people with hyperacusis.

“Many parents cannot accept that there is something chronically wrong with their child,” she said. “Surprise noise is the biggest enemy.” The condition remains poorly understood. “Sometimes, all I can do is help people live with an incurable disorder that doesn’t always get better and might get worse.”

She likened the pain to a toothache in the ear — and it worsens readily with additional noise exposure. “It’s not true that ordinary, everyday sound can’t hurt you. That’s a lie. My patients tell me the pain is severe and incapacitating.” She also gives tips for soundproofing at home and reducing noise in general.



*What teenager wants to stay at home wearing protective earmuffs instead of going go-karting with friends?*

*(illustration: Martina Fischmeister)*

## The Quietest House in the World

Turkish architect Onurcan Cakir has published a paper defining a “Silent House Typology,” which describes the architectural principles that create a house sufficiently quiet for someone with pain hyperacusis. Cakir acquired hyperacusis from loud music exposure and cannot tolerate digital, electronic or artificially amplified sounds.

The New York Post highlighted his quiet house, which he designed and built in the village of

Barbaros in Izmir, Turkey. Read here: <https://ny-post.com/2026/01/09/real-estate/inside-the-quietest-home-in-the-world/>



*The quietest house in the world, in Turkey, was featured in the New York Post.*

**Inside the quietest home in the world — which a Turkish architect built for himself out of medical need**

Outside noise is hard to block. The house’s walls are 20 inches thick. Just as water can seep through any gap, so can sound. “When there’s a small gap, most of the extensive insulation you’ve done goes to waste,” Cakir said.

Another big issue is neighbor noise. “Having respectful and understanding neighbors is a matter of chance, as they will be one of the main noise sources,” Cakir said.

Hyperacusis Research’s president, Steven Barad, MD, was quoted. “A home is generally not quiet unless someone makes it quiet,” he said. “Unfortunately, not everyone with pain hyperacusis can afford to live in a sufficiently quiet environment and they must control the surrounding noise the best they can.”

## Looking Ahead

Our work is made possible thanks to your generous support. In 2026, we plan to continue to raise money for research and to fund grants to find a cure.

As always, we are grateful for contributions by check mailed to our Massachusetts post office box (printed on the last page of this newsletter) and for online contributions by credit card via our website, [www.hyperacusisresearch.org](http://www.hyperacusisresearch.org) or our Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/hyperacusisresearch](https://www.facebook.com/hyperacusisresearch).

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