Preface

This issue of *Trends* is dedicated to providing the reader with a better understanding of digital signal processing. The recent introduction of behind-the-ear and in-the-ear digital hearing aids by Widex and Oticon seems to have captivated a segment of the audiology community. Hopes are high that digital signal processing will provide improved fidelity, significant improvement of recognizing speech in noise and reducing or eliminating feedback when compared to the performance of current hearing aids. Whether or not these hopes are achieved in the “field” remains to be seen. Whether or not the consumer “buys into” digital technology also remains to be seen. More times than we care to remember, audiologists have been disappointed by the claims created by manufacturers about the performance of “this” technology and “that” technology in improving user satisfaction with hearing aids. It is understandable why many audiologists seem to be hesitant in embracing digital technology and are expressing caution or subdued excitement. Many audiologists apparently are waiting to see the research demonstrating that digital technology provides better performance than hearing aids not incorporating this method of signal processing before encouraging their patients to embrace this new technology.

With this skepticism aside, there is no doubt that digital technology is the “wave of the future.” It will be incumbent upon audiologists and manufacturers to learn and teach both the consumer and clinician this emerging technology. This issue is dedicated to playing a role in that process of education. Audiologists can be assured that other manufacturers will introduce digital technology and that Widex and Oticon will offer significant improvements over their current versions of the Senso and Digifocus.

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