

**BLOG**

**BC COMPANY LAUNCHES FIRST ONLINE HEARING TEST AND VIRTUAL COUNSELING**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BC Company Launches First Online Hearing Test and Virtual Counseling  
It's now Easier for People with Hearing loss to meet with Local Audiologists

VANCOUVER, BC (February 10, 2015) - NexGen Hearing, and its sister company, Mainland Hearing, are now offering British Columbians the first ever online hearing screening test coupled with virtual ‘house call’, allowing patients to test their hearing using their computer and receive advice from a Hearing Professional in a video chat from the comfort of their homes.

One in three Canadians suffer from hearing loss, but most wait 7 to 10 years to seek treatment for their hearing loss. This is a serious problem because a recent study by researchers at Johns Hopkins and the National Institute on Aging found a direct connection between hearing loss and dementia. While everyone’s brain shrinks with age, participants of the study who had hearing loss showed accelerated rates of brain tissue loss compared to those with normal hearing.

“The main problem is that people are often embarrassed to seek help when they notice a change in their hearing,” said Marke Hambley, NexGen’s president and director of operations. “Canadians are waiting too long to get their hearing tested, which can ultimately affect their health, relationships, and overall lifestyle if they wait too long. We believe the convenience of NexGen and Mainland Hearing’s online test and virtual counseling will really change this.”

“This technology is very helpful as many patients do not follow through with a hearing evaluation, even after a doctor has recommended one,” says Dr. Roy Cheung, an ENT doctor and clinical Professor at UBC. “Video Consultation is more likely to encourage patients to pursue treatment for their hearing loss.”

Anyone can take the online test, which involves answering 23 questions to help measure a person’s ability to hear tones and speech, through NexGen and Mainland Hearing’s websites. It starts off with basic questions like, “Do you sometimes have difficulty understanding speech on the telephone or TV?” It then prompts you to listen to a series of calibrated sounds and words. The test determines if you might have hearing loss and prompts you to consult a hearing professional.

But you don’t have to physically visit a clinic to get professional advice. Instead, you can book a virtual appointment to talk to one of NexGen or Mainland’s clinicians. Hearing professionals, at 37 locations in BC, have trained to use MEDEO, a secure software program that already connects hundreds of family physicians with their patients online.

“This online test and virtual consulting system is going to revolutionize how people seek help for hearing loss,” Hambley said. “People will be able to test their hearing, schedule an appointment and talk with a specialist in a span of less than 24 hours.”

These new virtual services from NexGen and Mainland have already helped many NexGen and Mainland clients. Barbi Braude, a West Vancouver Mainland Hearing client, has severe hearing loss in her right ear and mild hearing loss in her left ear. She runs her own design company, so she doesn’t have time to visit a clinic when she needs to get her hearing aid checked.

“Two hours of my day is expensive,” Braude said. “Whereas the online technology from Mainland Hearing is great! you get an email inviting you to your appointment. It’s very easy to log in.” Braude said having appointments with her audiologist using her computer has really helped reduce her stress levels.

“Mainland has a vested interest in showing me the different technologies to help reduce the stress in my life,” she said. “Having any impediment, you have to work harder to navigate the world.”

Virtual consultations are also helping Canadians who live in rural communities and do not have access to local hearing specialists.

“We only have one doctor here for 3,500 people,” said Juanita Etson, who is 82-years-old and live in Sicamous.

“I’ve chosen to go home when my doctor’s office is too busy or other people’s appointments are more urgent,” Etson said. “But it only takes a day or two to get a virtual appointment.” Etson added that the technology is easy to use, saying if she can do it at her age, anyone can.

Rick Wiegel, an investment advisor who lives in Victoria, waited between seven to eight years to get his hearing tested after noticing a problem. “I knew my hearing was deteriorating,” he said. “initially, I was in denial.” Wiegel works a full-time job and has a small farm, so his time is very important to him. “There are lots of days when I start work at 7am and don’t leave before 5:30pm,” he said. “The virtual consultations make my life a lot easier. There’s a real convenience factor to it.”

About NexGen and Mainland Hearing

NexGen Hearing is a locally owned and operated company that provides hearing and communication solutions through 24 clinics across British Columbia.

Marke Hambley runs the company and has worked as a hearing instrument specialist for more than 40 years. Hambley is the founder and former owner and president of Island Hearing, which he grew from one branch in Victoria to 125 locations across the country.

Mainland Hearing is NexGen’s sister company. It provides the same high-quality hearing assistance to patients through its 13 clinics across the Lower Mainland.