

Have you heard?

Hearing is one of our most vital senses, and as our population ages the role of professional audiologists has become ever more critical

“By 2015, the World Health Organisation estimates that there will be around 1.1 billion hearing impaired people in the world,” audiologist Alexia Euthymiadou informed me when we met recently in Nicosia. “The ageing global population is obviously a factor, as is increasing noise pollution which affects more teenagers and young people. About 10% of the world’s population is affected with hearing loss and impairment and this number is increasing every year.”

Euthymiades Audiology Centre (EAC) is well placed to assist the hearing impaired population on the island. With headquarters in Nicosia, and satellite branches in Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos, the company is staffed by an experienced team of audiologists, hearing aid specialists and technicians, as well as UK-registered clinical scientists such as Alexia and her sister.

EAC began as an import-export company founded by her great-grandfather Zenon J. Euthymiades in 1899. “When my grandfather Jean Euthymiades took over the business, he happened to have a friend with a hearing problem,” she explained. “Using his contacts abroad, he imported the first hearing aid into Cyprus, much to the delight of his friend. That side of the business soon grew thanks to word of mouth, and a rudimentary audiology centre was established, which was the first on the island.”

Following some training, Jean Euthymiades was able to order and fit hearing aids for his clients. “Everything was more ready-made then, as technology wasn’t that advanced at the time. Also, there was no graduate profession in audiology that one could follow.” Gradually, the focus of the business changed to meet the growing need for hearing aids and to reflect the improvements in technology.

“My father had a business background,” Alexia said. “But he also began getting involved in training sessions, going abroad to Switzerland, Germany and Denmark.

Services offered by EAC

- Hearing assessments
- Hearing aid fittings and adjustments
- FM system fitting for schools and individuals
- Fully equipped lab for custom-made hearing aids
- Technical support
- Manufacture of earplugs and ear protection systems
- Paediatric assessment and management
- Newborn hearing screening
- Testing special needs children and adults
- Balance assessments and rehabilitation
- Distribution of audiological equipment
- Equipment calibration



Then we opened the first lab, and had the certification to fit hearing aids. When audiology became a graduate profession, my sister was the first one in the family to follow audiological science.” In time, Alexia followed her sister’s footsteps.

“What I wanted to do was something involving people, science, and psychology. And I always loved teaching and telling people what to do,” she smiled. “This profession actually combines all those things. And I love my job, as I’m also able to enjoy a personal as well as professional relationship with my clients.”

With over 30 years of collaborations with leading hearing aid brands such as PHONAK from Switzerland and OTICON from Denmark, EAC offers its clients the latest technology. “The company is also the official cochlear implant distributor for the Austrian brand MEDEL,” Alexia said, “and we provide surgical and audiological support to Nicosia General Hospital.”

“We do have to attend at least three seminars or trainings a year, to keep up to date with the latest advances,” she explained. “The major advancement in the last few years has been the transition from analogue to digital technology. That means we no longer rely on trimmers to adjust the hearing aids as it can be done by computer.”

A common type of hearing impairment encountered is sensorineural or cochlear hearing loss. “This is when the hearing nerve and cochlea are affected due to noise exposure or presbycusis which is due to wear and tear of the ear over time,” Alexia clarified. She advises that people can proactively protect their hearing, using custom-made ear plugs. “This is especially useful for those in professions such as musicians, DJs, construction workers, or anyone regularly exposed to

Causes of hearing loss and impairment

- Damage to inner ear leading to sensorineural hearing loss, caused by aging, exposure to noise pollution.
- Conductive hearing loss caused by a gradual buildup of earwax
- Ear infections, tumours or abnormal bone growth
- Ruptured eardrum, known as tympanic membrane perforation, caused by sudden changes in pressure, injury to the eardrum, loud explosions. This can affect divers, soldiers, construction workers for instance.
- Congenital conditions (in babies)

loud sounds.”

“The majority of clients are older people, over the age of 50,” explained Alexia. “Although 50 is considered young, given the greater life expectancy nowadays, that’s when people start to display symptoms, and often they first become aware of a problem due to comments from others who notice their declining hearing.”

In recent years, EAC has been able to expand into paediatric services and a dedicated multi-disciplinary and highly equipped balance clinic, which is the first

of its kind in Cyprus. This offers testing and rehabilitation of patients suffering with symptoms of dizziness, as well as elderly patients who have experienced falls.

The company’s future currently rests in the hands of Alexia and her siblings, who represent the fourth generation in the family business, and who are honoured to play a vital role in its development. “The fifth generation isn’t quite ready to take over yet,” Alexia laughed, “but who knows? They may do so soon.”

