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Oticon Epoq: True binaural sound processing marks paradigm shift

William Demant Holding today announced the launch of the next generation of hearing devices based on Oticon's powerful broadband wireless architecture, RISE. Oticon Epoq offers clients the world's first truly wireless binaural hearing solution with improved stereophonic reproduction of sound. In addition, Oticon Epoq offers effortless wireless connection to mobile phones and other modern communication devices.

Even though the human auditory system is binaural by nature, up until now hearing instruments have tried to compensate for a hearing loss through amplification with two instruments working independently on each side of the user's head. This way of relieving of hearing loss has however to a significant extent been insufficient compared to the manner in which a human being through its auditory system absorbs and makes use of the vast variety of information it receives during the day. With Oticon Epoq, this will change.

With a new and innovative solution, Oticon has created a foundation for the refined binaural processes carried out between the two ears and the brain. Based on wireless high-speed binaural sound processing between two hearing instruments, Oticon Epoq has superior stereophonic sound processing that could never be obtained with two devices working in isolation or with the conventional exchange of simple commands.

The result is a significantly improved ability for users to sense and locate sounds and distinguish voices in much the same way as people without hearing loss do without even thinking about it. The aim of Oticon Epoq is to provide people with hearing loss with unique orientation capabilities and supreme speech understanding. The wireless binaural broadband technology in Oticon Epoq allows for exchange of information at broadband speed (equal to entry level ADSL, 120 kbit/s).

Thanks to its broadband capabilities, Oticon Epoq can be supplied with the Epoq Streamer, an intuitive Bluetooth companion that with the push of a button instantly connects Epoq wirelessly to the user's mobile phone. Incompatibility and interference have made mobile phone usage increasingly and almost incriminatingly frustrating. Until now, users have all too often had to remove the instrument before answering a call or to awkwardly align the instrument and mobile phone to prevent acoustical feedback while securing proper audibility of the phone's loudspeaker. With Epoq and Streamer, those days are over. Later, other external sound sources will be added to the list of Bluetooth devices that can be connected wirelessly to the Streamer.

With an extended frequency range reaching 10 kHz and new innovative processing principles, sound quality is taken to a whole new level with Epoq. The step change in sound quality in Epoq will make it far easier for Epoq users to understand and freely communicate with people, and users are likely to feel and become more socially active.

"With true binaural sound processing, Epoq sets a new standard in the Premium segment, and the benefits for the user are substantial and comprehensive. Combined with the option of wireless Bluetooth connection to mobile phones, Epoq represents the biggest step forward since the introduction of digital hearing aids in the mid-90s," says Niels Jacobsen, President & CEO of William Demant Holding.

Epoq comes in two versions in order to span the entire Premium segment: the XW (eXtended Wireless) and the W (Wireless) versions – both available in all styles from CIC over RITE to BTE in a full range of colour combinations. Streamer works with both Epoq XW and Epoq W and is an add-on device for those who would like to take advantage of the option of wireless connectivity.

Epoq and Streamer will be presented at the AAA convention, which takes place 18-21 April 2007 in Denver, Colorado, USA, and the products will be released for sale during May 2007.

The contents of this announcement does not change the Company's expectations for 2007, as the effect of the launch of Oticon Epoq was already an integral part of the expectations for 2007 communicated in the Annual Report 2006 and most recently confirmed at the Company's annual general meeting on 29 March 2007.

Oticon Epoq and Streamer



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William Demant Holding has scheduled three presentations for investors and analysts in order to provide more detailed information about the Epoq product concept. The presentations will take place in Copenhagen (today at 3:00pm), in London (12 April at 8:30am) and during the AudiologyNOW! (AAA) convention in Denver, Colorado, USA (19 April at 3:00pm). Starting times for the meetings are stated in local times. For further information about these events, please contact Tine Ribergaard at +45 39 13 83 66 or tij@demant.dk.