

# New Product Releases For Fall 2011

By Pat Fournier BC-HIS

Spring and fall are the seasons when manufacturers launch new products into the marketplace. **Oticon**, **Siemens** and **Starkey** have improved their entire product lines. They made them more automatic, more effective, more sophisticated, easier to use, more cosmetically appealing and added more value for the dollar at all price points than ever before.

**oticon** PEOPLE FIRST has released their new **Intiga** line of RITE (Receiver In The Ear) hearing instruments. RITE is Oticon's vernacular for RIC (Receiver In the Canal). RICS and RITES are two words for the same thing.

These hearing aids use the same computer chip as their top performing "Pro" series. What makes these different are their small size and the attention paid to the needs and desires of first time wearers. These hearing aids are very small, highly invisible and totally automatic (with no user controls on the aids). They are designed for the user to place in his or her ears and forget them. Although they are simple to use, these hearing aids are quite sophisticated and can be accentuated with Bluetooth devices and streaming assistive listening systems. I believe this new line will be wonderful for younger (21 to 75 year old) first time users.



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Oticon • ConnectLine



Starkey launched a number of new products and added a number of enhancements to their entire product line. They enhanced the S series IQ (What a cumbersome name!) and renamed it the **X series**. These Starkey hearing aids have the best feedback control system in the marketplace. Also they enhanced the noise control system, improved the directional microphone and added something called "Spectral IQ".

Spectral IQ adds overtones to some real high frequency sounds so that a person with a profound high frequency hearing loss can hear sounds like an "s" or "f" or "th" more clearly. Spectral IQ adds clarity to speech where we couldn't before. The X series is available from tiny CIC (Completely In the Canal) styles to large BTE (Behind the Ear) styles.

Starkey also expanded their RIC line of hearing aids with a new smaller **Xino** line. The Xino RIC is small and uses a size 10 battery. Xinos feature all the enhancements that the entire X series does.

Their new **WI line** of hearing aids receives an audio stream from a TV without Bluetooth. The sound signal from a TV or music device goes directly into the hearing aids using 2.4 Ghz. There is no streamer to wear around your neck so it is more convenient.



**Siemens** added new BTE hearing aids **Hearing Instruments** on their very successful digital platform. These hearing aids didn't need a lot of technological enhancements. Siemens even further enhanced those products' durability and flexibility.

The **Aquaris** is Siemens waterproof, sweat proof, shock proof hearing aid. It is designed to take a beating. At three (3) different technology and price points, they fit into many different active lifestyles.

The very popular Siemens RIC line called the Pure has added a new line, it is "**Pure Carat**".

It takes a larger battery for longer battery life and the push button memory control has been changed into a toggle switch. The advantage of the switch is that one can now operate memories (programs) or volume if desired. The Siemens Pure offered onboard memory control, but no volume control. Research has shown that volume control is the one item people want if they can only choose one control.

## A product that didn't do too well

Every season as new products are introduced, others are dropped. Usually, it takes a few years for an item to be purged because of investment into the development of the product. At the last conference that I attended, I received unofficial reports from other practitioners about a recent product that hasn't lived up to expectations. The AMP from Starkey was a model with a high return rate. The AMP is a tiny off the shelf hearing aid. The programming was not flexible and people felt plugged up.

