

# Acoustic Analgesia Cuts Patient's Pain Sensation

By WARD CANNEL  
Newspaper Enterprise Assn.  
NEW YORK (NEA) — "That tooth will have to come out," the dentist said, laying out a pair of pliers and a chisel. "Now, what would you like, Gas? Procaine? Beethoven? Cole Porter . . . ?"

As it turns out, certain sounds have now been proved to be pain-killers—better in some cases than

in the traditional potions. And if clinical tests continue at their present success, your dentist may soon replace his needles or nose mask with a tape library and a pair of earphones.

It's called acoustic analgesia and it works like this:

The music you select is played stereophonically to you through earphones while you lie in the

dentist's chair. The sound is usually edited in the taping to cut out extreme high and low frequencies which may upset you.

Meanwhile, the tape machine is generating its own low-frequency "white sound"—a noise that resembles a waterfall or a radio tuned between stations.

When drilling, extraction or other painful dental work begins, the white sound is brought up gradually until it blocks out the music in your earphones and blocks out the pain as well.

In-the-chair reports show that it holds its pain-killing power for the entire hour of the dental session, leaving no after-effects.

"In fact," according to Dr. Jerome Mittelman, "many of my patients begin by being extremely skeptical of acoustical analgesia and finish by leaving my office relaxed and elated—even though I've pulled their teeth or drilled, or done other painful work."

Dr. Mittelman, a pioneer in the use of this technique and a regular reporter to the nation's dentists on progress and problems, claims real therapeutic gains in this molar-fi over other anesthetics.

"It's a boon to cardiac and diabetic patients," Dr. Mittelman says, "because they often cannot take the usual drugs or gasses."

"In addition, it is helpful to all patients as it cuts down their apprehension by relaxing them, masking the sounds of prepara-

tion, and generally raising their threshold of pain so the white sound can do its job. A relaxed patient also makes the dentist's job much easier."

Just why the white sound kills pain has not yet been explained. Experts think it may be because of the closeness of the auditory and pin nerves in the head, or because the white sound brings on symptoms stronger than the pain.

Regardless of why it works, it works well. And not only for dentists. It has been a shot in the ear to the whole stereo industry.

The average dental office molar-fi equipment (not counting the tape library) costs from \$750 to \$1,500. And new medical uses are opening up in maternity and arthritis wards, etc.

The Elrad Company, one of the 15 now in this field, reports that it will have a small home model shortly with built-in timing mechanisms so that persons in pain can go to sleep comfortably. It was, in fact, an arthritis victim who discovered the potential of acoustic analgesia while listening

to a hi-fi set. Recent research shows, however, that patients who take too much white sound too frequently can become immune. But in moderation, everyone agrees, there appears to be no harm in it.

"You have no idea," Dr. Mittelman says, "what it's like, after a hard day with patients, to climb into the chair, put on the earphones and



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