

**Emerging Research Grants (ERG)**

As one of the only funding sources available in hearing and balance science, HHF's ERG program is critical. Without our support, these scientists would not have the needed resources for innovative approaches toward preventing, researching, and finding better treatments for hearing and balance conditions.

# Meet the Researcher



**Carolyn McClaskey, Ph.D.**

Medical University of South Carolina

McClaskey earned her doctorate in psychology and cognitive science at the University of California, Irvine and completed her postdoctoral studies in auditory neuroscience at the Medical University of South Carolina, where she is now a research assistant professor in the department of otolaryngology-head & neck surgery. McClaskey is a 2023 Emerging Research Grants recipient generously funded by Royal Arch Research Assistance.

**I HAVE IMMENSE RESPECT** for the complexities of the human brain and its capacity to adapt. My research focuses on how the brain adjusts to the changes that happen with age and hearing loss. This project was inspired by the idea that an overadjustment to change could be just as detrimental as an under-adjustment, especially in a system that is incredibly complicated. If we can better understand how our brain adapts to hearing loss, and what happens if and when those changes get out of control, then we can work toward better solutions for the speech communication and hearing problems we face as we get older.

**I HAVE FRIENDS AND FAMILY** who are affected by hearing loss of varying degrees, but it wasn't until I got to graduate school that I realized how widespread hearing loss is and how much it can affect us. Working in this field has helped me appreciate how common hearing problems are—especially as we get older—and how we need more awareness of hearing health.

**MY INTEREST IN NEUROSCIENCE** began after I hit my head in college, where I was studying biochemistry and music, and struggled to play classical piano for a couple days. That led me to wonder about the connection between hearing, music, and the brain. I love working with data and using research to understand how the world works. But if I had to pick another career besides science, I think maybe interior design, or being a writer, or photographer... something creative! Luckily science can be very creative too, so I feel like I've found a good compromise.

**I ALSO LOVE NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY**, especially bird and wildlife photography. It helps me get away from my desk

and out into nature, where I can spend time in a completely different environment. Some of the best wildlife photography happens when you can make yourself invisible in the environment and just passively observe nature in action—and a lot of action happens when humans aren't around! I think that has a lot of parallels with science. It helps me think more carefully about my research questions and what we don't know about hearing health and aging.

**SOMETIMES MY FELLOW RESEARCHERS** are surprised to learn that I love listening to loud music. It's terrible for your ears, I know! I don't use earbuds, and I always wear hearing protection. Sometimes the dynamic range of the genre of music I like—electronic—means it gets loud at times, and I love that. —



*Carolyn McClaskey, Ph.D., is generously funded by Royal Arch Research Assistance. We thank them for their support of studies that will increase our understanding of the mechanisms, causes, diagnosis, and treatments of central auditory processing disorders.*

**We need your help** funding the exciting work of hearing and balance scientists. Please consider donating today to Hearing Health Foundation to support groundbreaking research. **Visit [hhf.org/how-to-help](https://hhf.org/how-to-help).**