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**PRESS RELEASE**

**02 MARCH 2016**

**FREE HEARING TEST WITH LOCAL APP “hearZA”**

An app that lets users test their hearing using their smart device has been developed and validated by [researchers at the University of Pretoria](http://www.up.ac.za/speech-language-pathology-and-audiology). If a user of the app fails the hearing test, the app recommends the nearest hearing health provider based on the user’s location.

The app, [hearZATM](http://www.hearscreen.com/hearza/), was officially launched on 2 March 2016 at The Innovation Hub in Tshwane, ahead of [World Hearing Day](http://www.who.int/pbd/deafness/news/WHD2016/en/) on 3 March. It will be available for download nationally on both Android and iOS operating systems at no cost, thus providing millions of South Africans with a free hearing test.

“More than 3 million South Africans suffer from permanent disabling hearing loss” explains [Prof De Wet Swanepoel](http://www.up.ac.za/en/faculty-of-humanities/article/2082261/professor-de-wet-swanepoel), lead-inventor of the hearZATM app. He says unidentified hearing loss has far reaching consequences, including communication difficulties, less energy, and a higher risk of depression and dementia.

Early detection using hearZATM can ensure access to better hearing for better living. The 2-minute test, made possible by Vodacom, [Sivantos](https://www.sivantos.com/en/), [Oticon](http://www.oticon.co.za/) and the [Ear Institute](http://www.earinstitute.co.za/), requires users to listen to simple digits in noise. On completion, each user receives a unique hearing score.

To ensure that users identified with a hearing problem follow-up to get the help they need, the app links them to their closest hearing health providers based on geolocation, which most modern smart devices are enabled with.

The South African Association of Audiologists ([SAAA](http://www.audiologysa.co.za)) and Speech Language and Hearing Association ([SASLHA](http://www.saslha.co.za/)), have partnered with hearZATM to build a national referral network.

In support of World Hearing Day, the first 18 persons identified with a disabling hearing loss using the hearZATM App will receive a sponsored audiological evaluation at a registered provider, as well as hearing aids if needed. These hearing aids will be donated by leading manufacturers Sivantos, Oticon and the Ear Institute.

“The smartphone-based National Hearing Test is the first of its kind,” says Prof Swanepoel, “not only providing accurate testing but encouraging hearing health awareness through a gamified user-experience”.

hearZATM is released by [hearScreen (Pty)](http://www.hearscreen.com/), which has licensed the IP from the University of Pretoria, and it is currently supported by [The Innovation Hub](http://www.theinnovationhub.com/#home) under its [Maxum Business Incubator](http://www.maxumconnect.com/) and [mLab Southern Africa](http://www.mlab.co.za/).

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**Images, Screenshots, Soundclips & multi-media:**

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B6OLMFyXsZtPbHh0QU1nS1BYa3c>

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