

OUR COCHLEAR IMPLANT JOURNEY: LOOKING BACK AND MOVING AHEAD



We celebrated our 36th anniversary of cochlear implantation at Tygerberg Hospital on 4 November 2022 and looking back we know that almost 1000 patient's lives has been changed forever.

In the early 1800's Alessandro Volta invented the electric battery and was the first person to stimulate the hearing system electronically. He connected each pole of his battery to a probe and inserted it into his ear canals – when closing a switch to allow electrical current to flow, he experienced a "jolt in the head" with crackling, jerking and bubbling sounds that followed to his surprise! This sparked the interest of the medical community believing that hearing can be restored through electrical stimulation.

Fast forward a few centuries to 1961 and Drs House and Doyle developed and implanted their patients with an experimental auditory device that stimulated the auditory system with a single electrode. This implant gave patients the ability to hear limited sounds.

Using only one electrode was however not an effective way to hear different pitches. Australian otologist, Dr Graeme Clark, was convinced that inserting multiple electrodes into the cochlea to stimulate separate groups of hearing nerve fibres along the cochlea in order to convey different pitch sensations were needed. Dr Clarke and physicist David Dewhurst from the University of Melbourne designed the first multi-channel cochlear implant with 20 electrodes. This groundbreaking device delivered electrical current at different places in the cochlea resulting in the ability to hear different pitches. Dr Clark implanted his first

volunteer patient successfully in 1978. FDA approval was obtained in 1985 and the first successful commercialized multichannel CI was launched. Those implanted with this device did not only report that it made lip-reading easier but it also enabled them to understand speech without lipreading.

The first multi-channel cochlear implant in Africa was implanted at Tygerberg Hospital in November 1986. Rinelma Wapenaar was our first recipient and could hear again using her body worn sound processor.

Over the years we have seen many technological advancements with miniaturisation of electronics allowing sound processors to become smaller and smaller and even the option of behind-the-ear and off-the-ear options. Sound processors have become smarter and now connect with wireless devices, and the processor can now be controlled with an App. Who would have thought that streaming a phone call or watching YouTube or Netflix directly through your processor would have been possible!

We dream of cochlear implants in the future where electrodes will provide medicine to the cochlea, sound processors will be more power efficient, connectivity to any audio device will be possible, all newborn babies will receive a hearing screening and get cochlear implants before 6 months of age and maybe even a totally implantable cochlear implant will allow for invisible uninterrupted hearing. May the small spark started in 1986, grow to bring the joy of hearing to many more.

The stories below are excerpts from our patient and parents' stories - their full stories are kept together with their photograph in an album at the Cochlear Implant Unit. All the recipients expressed their heartfelt thanks to family, friends and the Tygerberg Hospital Cochlear Implant team for the support they received in their journeys. Many also gave thanks to God.

Hieronder is verkorte weergawe van stories van ons inplanting gebruikers en hul ouers. Die volledige stories en 'n foto is beskikbaar in die foto-album by die Kogeleëre Inplantingseenheid. Al die pasiënte het hulle families, vriende en die Tygerberg Hospitaal Kogeleëre Inplantingseenheid bedank vir die ondersteuning wat hulle ontvang het tydens die inplantingsproses. Baie pasiënte gee ook alle eer aan God.

OKWETHU NOMKHUSANE (NO 882)



Okwethu, has an older brother who is deaf. The fear of having another deaf child made me very anxious. When Okwethu was about 10 months old, I was worried because he was not responding to sound or his name. I told my family, and they said that kids are different, my son will speak. At 11 months, I took him to the clinic and I was told nothing is wrong with him, but once he turned 12 months without any changes, I must bring him back. I waited and there were no changes. I went back to them, and they sent us to hospital. Unfortunately, it was confirmed that Okwethu was deaf in both ears. It was a big shock.

He received hearing aids but they didn't help. They told me Okwethu is a candidate for a Cochlear implant. As soon as I heard that there is a chance that he may be able to speak with a cochlear implant, I said yes because my first child didn't get that chance. What an amazing experience to see how he responded for the first time at the switch-on. After 7 months there were more changes as he was able to say mama, bye-bye etc. I don't regret my decision to say yes to CI, my son is doing well and there are more words coming out. Thank you to the Cochlear Implant Unit for making it happen

for my second born. It was not an easy journey, but through God and Carel du Toit's team, I am still standing and protecting my beautiful kids. Cochlear Implantation restored my confidence.

AMELIA THRUBEN (NO 883)



I've been struggling with hearing problems since childhood. I've been in and out of hospitals and was so frustrated that I decided to just let it go and go on with my life.

I started working at a Mall in 2015 as a cleaner. One day I saw the hearing test clinic. I was scared but decided to go for a test. It was such a comfortable experience. They recommended that I go to Tygerberg Hospital. Things started moving forward, I got hearing aids and then was offered a cochlear implant.

Even though I was scared to go for the operation, now that it is all done, I am amazed! I got my new sound processor kit, had to learn new sounds, what it is and where it's coming from. I'm blessed and grateful that I can now have a decent conversation. I even hear the wind, birds and my breathing! My hearing has improved and after a year I'm full of confidence!

LAUREN CAPES (NO 898)



I am 54 years old, and I was born with a hearing disability. For most of my life, I have worn a hearing aid on my right ear. I am a great lip reader, and this is how I have always managed to get by. I believed that this was simply the way I would be for the rest of my life.

Then COVID came along – and with it, mandatory mask-wearing for almost two years. I became incredibly frustrated at the people I would talk to, as their masks prevented me from lip-reading and "hearing" what they were saying. Conversations were challenging, to say the least.

During this time, I got tinnitus. The loud buzzing in my head, birds tweeting etc. became unbearable. I went to an audiologist who referred me to an ENT surgeon and mentioned that I could be a CI candidate, and that it should reduce the tinnitus.

It has been an absolutely amazing journey so far. I can hear sounds that I never heard before, and after each mapping session my hearing improved even more. I am a Customer Services Manager and can proudly share that I can now listen to voice notes on WhatsApp. I can hear conversations during Teams meetings (and no longer need live captions to keep up), and I am able to talk to customers over the phone. One customer told me that she had tears in her eyes as I could hear the conversation instead of communicating via e-mail.

The biggest lesson I have learnt is to do my homework after each mapping session; this really helped tremendously. It has also been a huge relief to have my tinnitus drastically reduced. In a nutshell, my life changed overnight.

JOSEPH MTSHALIN (NO 899)



I was born with a hearing loss which got worse over the years to the point where I was only making use of lip reading. I started wearing hearing aids at the age of 54 and in later months a cochlear implant was recommended.

I never thought a day of such joy will arrive after so many years. After my surgery and switch-on, many mapping sessions were needed, however as time passed, I began to better follow people when they were talking. I started to hear all sorts of sounds around me, I could hear the birds singing. I feel young again.

MARIETJIE BRAND (NO 900)



Ek is 77 jaar oud en woon in Rawsonville. Ek het in 2008 besef ek het 'n ernstige gehoorverlies en is toegerus met 2 gehoorapparate.

My gehoor het sodanig verswak in die daaropvolgende jare dat ek, prakties gesproke, doof geword het. Verder het ek ook gloukoom opgedoen, eers in een oog en kort daarna ook in die ander oog. Die gevolg was dat ek blind geword het en dat my blindheid, permanent is. Die trauma van doof en blindheid het veroorsaak dat ek totaal van enige kommunikasie afgesny was.

Na die inplanting was dit wonderlik om weer stemme van familie en vriende te hoor. Die lewe het weer sin gemaak, en die toekoms nie meer so droewig nie. Ek kon skielik weer met my familie en vriende praat, selfs per telefoon, en ek kon na die radio luister en sodoende op hoogte bly van die daaglikse nuus. Elke dag van my bestaan dank ek die liewe Vader en die mediese & oudiologie personeel van Tygerberg Hospitaal vir die geleentheid om weer met my lewe te kan aangaan.

MARK ENGLISH (NO 903)



I am 54 years old, and living in Somerset West, with my mother and brother. I have a congenital hearing loss and an unknown syndrome.

I have had many hearing tests and a few operations to my ears. I started with hearing aids which worked for a time, but as my hearing deteriorated, I had to move over to a BAHA (Bone Anchored Hearing Aid) on the left side and a cochlear implant was recommended for the right ear.

Wearing the BAHA and the Cochlear Implant together has greatly improved my hearing. With just the BAHA sound was very soft, but now with both the sound is magnified and it is great.

I especially enjoy listening to my music which I can stream directly from my phone to the BAHA and to the cochlear sound processor. It sounds like I am at a virtual concert, which is wonderful.

My experience with the Cochlear Implant was actually hilarious at first. When the volume of the

Cochlear Implant was very low, the sound and the words, were tinny, metallic and when I heard voices, it sounded very much like chipmunks. But now combining the BAHA and the Cochlear Implant it is wonderful, and the volume of the sound processor has increased. I can hear lots of other noises, especially birds.

The lesson learned with the Cochlear is that I have learned to appreciate sound, I have to be grateful for the sounds that I do hear. If anyone is not sure if they want to get a Cochlear Implant, I'd say go for it. Just do it, you will never regret it.

SHADRACK ZWANE (NO 905)



I am 48 years old. In 2015 I was diagnosed with meningitis. When I was discharged from hospital, I was blind and lost my hearing.

I had a hearing aid on my left ear and the other ear could not hear at all. It was difficult to hear with the hearing aid because it could not pick up the sound properly. Especially in crowded areas such as a mall. I ended up with depression, could not go out and always chose to be alone as I could not have a conversation with other people. It resulted in me losing confidence and hope.

In the year of 2022, I came to Tygerberg Hospital to receive a Cochlear Implant. My audiologist guided me through the process of Cochlear Implantation. My life has changed for the better. I can communicate with groups of people. My confidence is back. I can hear properly even the soft sounds I could hear as before. This is a real privilege, the gift of a cochlear implant.

MARK FÜRST (NO 906)



Acoustic to Cybernetic Hearing

At the age of 4 months I was fitted with hearing aids after parental discovery of my indifference to the family dog barking into my ears, and the subsequent diagnosis of profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Despite this early intervention, 1970s technology was incapable of mitigating the severity of my hearing loss beyond limited acoustic amplification of low frequency sounds. I mastered lipreading and speech at the Carel du Toit Centre, went to mainstream schools, graduated university, joined the corporate world and started a family – all the while constantly upgrading to the latest and most powerful hearing aids on the market. Yet I remained dissatisfied at the limitations of my hearing which was beginning to affect me personally and professionally. After the Tygerberg Hospital Cochlear Implant Unit assessed that I was a perfect candidate for a cochlear implant, I found myself caught up in analysis paralysis for several years. In the aftermath of the global pandemic, I realised I needed to either accept the limitations of acoustic amplification or take a calculated risk and commit to a cochlear implant.

On the back of extensive research, I underwent surgery for simultaneous bilateral cochlear implants in December 2021. Although I attempted to keep my hopes high and expectations low, the day of activation in January 2022 was a disagreeable experience and a complete contradiction of the innumerable online blogs and YouTube testimonies on activation that, in hindsight, was completely inapplicable to my case history.

Over the next few months, the incomprehensible beeps and squawks that I heard within my head started to manifest as recognisable and familiar sounds. I also began hearing unfamiliar sounds at higher frequencies that were previously inaccessible to me, and it was a journey in itself to identify and classify these new sounds.

Cochlear implantation is like navigating a hard and rocky path leading up extremely steep terrain that turns out to be Mount Everest. It's not an impossible climb, but it's not going to be a frolic in the park either. Putting one rehab foot after the other, day by day, brings me closer to the summit. If I had to do things differently, knowing what I know now, maybe I would have started the climb 20 or 30 years ago. But I didn't, so the second-best time to start the climb was the day that I got the implants, and it's all uphill from here -- but the summit beckons.

ZION GOLIATH (NO 907)



Zion is almost 3 years old. When they took his vital signs at birth, his lungs were not getting enough oxygen. He was admitted to hospital and put on oxygen where he was also treated for neonatal jaundice. After five days in hospital Zion went for a hearing screening test. We were then referred for further diagnostic testing at Tygerberg Hospital. There we were informed that Zion has Auditory Neuropathy.

At five months old he received hearing aids which were not a big help. It was decided that a CI would be the best solution. His CI surgery (right ear) took place on the 23rd December 2021 and his switch on happened on the 2nd February 2022. In August of 2022 Zion started at the Carel du Toit School. We are so blessed and thankful for everyone at Tygerberg Hospital as well as the team at Carel du Toit CHAT (Children Hear and Talk) Centre for helping us on this journey.

FAHEEMAH LINDERS (NO 908)



I am 24 years old and had hearing loss since I was in high school. When I received my hearing aids it didn't really seem to me like it were helping at all and I stopped wearing it. I had to read lips to communicate with people.

Then Covid-19 started, and everyone had to wear masks, this was a terrible time for me! I didn't want to go to shops because I couldn't understand what people were saying. It was then when I decided to get another hearing test and it was confirmed that my hearing deteriorated and that I needed to consider a cochlear implant. I was so emotional and scared at the same time.

Since I got my cochlear implant, I can communicate so much better. I can listen to voice notes and even take and make phone calls which I couldn't do before. I am more independent. Thanks to the cochlear implant, it has changed my life and I am forever grateful for this.

MOENEEFA ADAMS (NO 909)



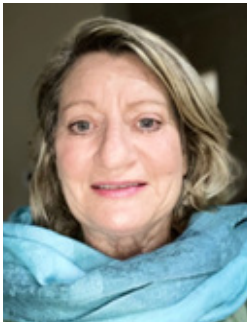
I am 43 years old. I lost my hearing in my right ear, when a firecracker exploded near my ear bursting my eardrum when I was 15 years old. I continued hearing with my left ear until it deteriorated, and I needed hearing aids to assist me. I was using the hearing aids and relying on lip reading to help me communicate.

When Covid hit and masks were mandatory, communication became nearly impossible! Upon consultation with my audiologist, she referred me to Tygerberg Hospital to have me evaluated for a cochlear implant.

I had the operation a few months later and my switch on was in April 2022. I was not expecting to hear much on switch on but was pleasantly surprised how quickly I got accustomed to the 'new hearing', even though singers still sound a bit like the chipmunks.

I can now recognize most sounds and follow conversations much better. I am more confident in having conversations with strangers, without the sentence starting with, 'I am deaf, I can't hear.' There is an enormous difference of what I can hear when I am wearing my implant & when I remove it at night.

KAREN BRODOVCKY (NO 912)



For me, my cochlear journey can be summed up in one word, gratitude. I am a 69-year-old mom, gran, friend and family member. I love nothing more than to hear the laughter and fun of those around me.

I am grateful that I found an audiologist that recognised that I needed more than hearing aids to hear, process and be part of all I love.

I am grateful that the audiologist and surgeon found me a cochlear audiologist who I resonate with. My switch on was the day my mom died! I know she wanted me to hear so on with the process! I heard the audiologist and my extremely supportive husband that day. Was a bit like them being on helium but I heard! Digital and soundwave hearing are different especially at first.

I immersed myself in the things I had been missing, even if at times it was tough. I kept trying. I did all the homework and put myself in situations that were challenging. It takes work and wearing the implants all the time to hear better. Now, I can hear people talking in the car behind me. I can travel to the bush on safari and hear the guide and the birds! Music isn't great yet, but I need more practice. Speech is what I needed most and that is good! I am just 7 months into this journey. It has been amazing! Gratitude has no bounds. Next year next implant!

COLENE BURGER (NO 914)



Op 2 jarige ouderdom het my ouers uitgevind dat ek doof is. Ek is die oudste van 3 sussies en is die enigste Dowe persoon in die familie. My familie en gesin het my deurentyd ondersteun en gemotiveer. Hulle het my vir spraaklesse geneem en ons het goeie onderwysers en terapeute gehad.

Ek was vir 37 jaar deel van die "Dowe wêreld"/ gemeenskap". Gedurende hierdie tyd het ek gehoorapparate gedra en was afhanklik van spraaklesse asook gebaretaal. Ek het baie swak tot geen gehoor gehad. Ek het aanvanklik geweier om te gaan vir 'n kogleêre implanting. Ek was bang. In 2021 het my regteroor se gehoor nog meer verswak, nie eers 'n apparaat kon help nie. Ek is verwys vir 'n KI en het ingestem.

Op 8 Maart 2022 is die operasie gedoen en 24 Maart 2022 is dit aangeskakel en het my lewe WONDERBAARLIK verander. Wat 'n verbasende oomblik toe ek my eie stem en geluide kon hoor.

Nog nooit het ek so duidelik gehoor nie. Lae en hoë frekwensie-klanke, fyn geluide soos die getik van die muurhorlosie, die blaf van honde, verskillende geluide buite van voëls, die gepraat van mense, selfs as hul agter my staan (nog nie altyd so duidelik nie maar dit word al beter). Ek praat nou sagter en kan net lof, eer en dankbaarheid gee aan my Skepper wat die dokter, van Tygerberg en terapeute op my pad gebring het. Deur hul volgehoue ondersteuning en motivering verbeter my spraak dag na dag.

RIAAN BURGER (NO 915)



Op 3 jarige ouderdom het my Ouma opgetel dat ek Doof geword het.

My ouers self is ook Doof en hulle het my gehoor laat toets. Van daar af het ek begin apperate dra en geleer om lip te lees. Ek kon ook vir my Ouma bel van die telefoon af.

In 1996 het ons Worcester toe getrek en ek was ingeskryf by De la Bat skool vir Dowes. My gehoor het egter stadig verswak. By De la Bat skool het ons meer gefokus op net gebaretaal, want dit is die taal van die Dowe wêreld en ons gehoorreste was nie gestimuleer nie. Ook geen liplees- en spraaklesse gehad nie. Toe ek klaargemaak het met skool het ek besef dat praat baie belangrik is veral in werks-konteks. Nie almal kan gebaretaal praat nie. Horendes in my lewe het my gehelp om nie skaam te wees oor hoe my stem klink nie. My selfvertroue het verbeter om meer te praat en vir ander te wys dat ek ook 'n normale mens is. Ek kon met my apperate van die klanke hoor, maar saam met lip-lees kon ek die woorde verstaan.

Baie van my vriende en onderwysers het my probeer oortuig om 'n kogleëre inplanting te kry. Ek wou dit nie vroeër laat doen nie, ek was jonk en bang vir die negatiewe "stories" wat ek gehoor het. Die geleentheid het weer verby gekom en ek het dit aangegryp.

Op 8 Maart 2022 het ek die operasie ondergaan en op 24 Maart was my aangeskakeling. Dit was so snaaks vir my om my eie stem so duidelik te hoor.

Nou is dit 6 maande later en ek hoor so baie verskillende dinge, insluitend al die verskillende klanke van verskillende voëls – dit nog nooit besef nie. Nou begin ek luister wat mense sê sonder liplees. Nou kan ek weer musiek luister. Ek hou ook baie daarvan om met my hond bal te speel en ek het altyd net haar ge-blaf gehoor, nou hoor ek selfs, wanneer sy die bal vir my bring, hoe sy hyg na haar asem. Selfs die klanke soos sy hardloop en haar stert wat swaai van blydschap. Dit is so ongelooflik, het dit nog nooit gehoor nie en sal dit nooit vergeet nie.

Dit verbreed my wêreld, en kan dit nie vergelyk met voorheen nie. Ek besef ek moes vasbyt om my brein van voor af te leer wat al die nuwe klanke is, maar dit was die moeite werd. Ek is spyt dat ek dit nie al lankal laat doen het nie. Ek sien uit na hoe ek oor 'n jaar vorder met my gehoor – en begin nou weer droom.

IVOR FUNNELL (NO 916)



I have always loved listening to music and had some training at school, but never much talent. I have collected a lot of music from the 70's and 80's. At first my hearing loss did not impact too much on this enjoyment, or even my surgical profession, and was quite gradual in the beginning. It was certainly annoying to have to accept using hearing aids in ones 40's, one never anticipates what may happen.

Over the last 2-3 years the loss of hearing accelerated, and even the best hearing aids were unable to make me hear very well, and I no longer enjoyed music. The wearing of masks during the epidemic was extremely debilitating on my communication, and a Cochlear Implant was suggested.

I underwent the operation in March 2022. My surgeon operated, and I spent the next few weeks in relative deafness. The activation was almost, or rapidly thereafter a miracle. I did not need too much rehabilitation, and soon was able to enjoy music played normally, and listen to the phone by streaming into the device. I am much better in company, and also at work and in meetings.

My most recent achievement has been a Birding weekend.... Yes, I do mean bird calls, and it is incredible how well I was able to hear. It really has been a game changer, until it falls off!

GRAYSON BROWN (NO 918)



Grayson was diagnosed with severe sensori-neural hearing loss on the 22nd of December 2021.

With amazing support from the CHAT centre, we were able to begin our journey towards supporting Grayson to gain access to sound.

He was implanted on the 29th of March with bilateral cochlear implants and activated on the 29th of April 2022.

There have been many up and downs along the way however it has been all made worthwhile as we continue to see how he develops along the way. His resilience and smile encourage us to never give up and that there is always a glimmer of hope to hold on to.



MICHAEL ALFOS (NO 919)



Michael was between the age of 4-5 years old when we discovered he has a hearing problem.

In 2017 he got his hearing aids and started his journey at Carel Du Toit school. The audiologist at Carel Du Toit School noticed his hearing deteriorated, and referred us to Tygerberg Hospital who recommended a Cochlear implant

Even though myself and my boy were both nervous on the day of the operation his audiologist at Tygerberg Hospital was our support system from the start until today. Switch-on day was a bit overwhelming, but Michael has improved so much. The cochlear implant has given him the best gift of life. Michael can hear for the first time with his right ear. My son is super excited about his new ear.

Michael is now in grade 4 at Seven Steps Academy.



DEVINA BEGG (NO 921)



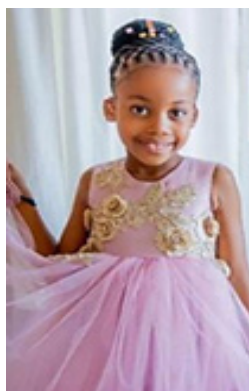
I have a beautiful two-year-old daughter. Devina who was a normal baby just a bit delayed with her development. We realized that Devina was not paying attention to sound. I started doing my own tests, clapping behind her seeing if she would look. I even did research on Google to recognize signs of hearing loss.

I took her to Red Cross Hospital where she was diagnosed with bilateral profound hearing loss. I still remember hearing the news and how broken I felt. The audiologist was helpful and explained to me that there were deaf schools and we could learn sign language or we could explore the cochlear implant option. She immediately set up a meeting with Carel Du Toit school as well as Tygerberg Hospital. Everything happened so quickly. Due to repeated middle ear infections 'glue ear', her cochlear implant operation was postponed 3 times. The attempts to dry her ears was taking forever. The amazing support structure at the CI unit and the school gave helped keep the faith. The day officially came, and the implant was successful. The switch on took place shortly thereafter and what an amazing experience.

Devina also started school at Carel Du Toit Centre. The progress she has made is amazing. She says a few words and makes sounds. Her personality has changed. She enjoys taking pictures, expressing herself and listening with understanding. The cochlear has really improved her communication skills. I know our journey is a lifetime journey with all the support given this journey will be an amazing one and I have complete faith that my little angel will become a capable young lady.



LIVENI SIWISA (NO 922)



I will never forget the day I got a call from my daughter school's audiologist saying that my daughter's hearing on the right ear is deteriorating. I never thought that after hearing loss there was a possibility of more hearing loss. Fast forwarding, we received an invitation to Tygerberg Hospital where we were going to meet with an audiologist to explain the cochlear implant procedure and what we needed to know. We were adamant that our dearest daughter would be fine with the hearing aids and did not need this new technology that is promising to aid with her hearing.

I must say that with the right kind of information from the experts and advice from other parents with children who have cochlear implants we eventually decided to give it a try. What if it does not work? What if it causes more damage than good what then? Is the procedure reversible? We went to the hospital very nervous; the operation was a success. Liveni, who is 9 years old, had to learn how to hear with this new device.

Today I see the results of choosing a cochlear implant for my daughter. She hears better and her speech has improved. She does not even have to lip read to understand what we are saying at home. I am truly grateful and would recommend it to anyone suffering from hearing loss.

DAVID HUTCHISON (NO 925)



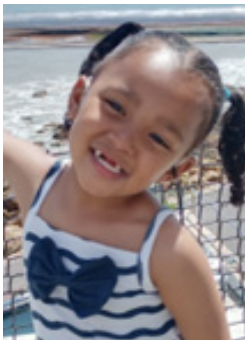
I am 33 years old, and I run my own company. I have a profound hearing loss, and I have worn bilateral hearing aids since I was 14 years old. In May of this year, after thinking about it for about five years, I decided to undergo surgery for a cochlear implant.

My family has a long history with deafness, and four members of my family (including my dad) have already received cochlear implants. My hearing loss started younger than expected and continued to degenerate throughout my teenage years and my twenties. Yet despite the severity of my hearing loss, I was well aided and always coped well in learning, work and social settings, and never felt that my disability held me back. As a result, I struggled to understand why my family and my audiologist kept recommending that I explore a CI. My biggest fear was the loss of my residual hearing; my low sounds were almost normal, and the thought of not being able to hear without my processor was daunting. After many conversations and understanding the significant strides that have been made in hearing preservation, I decided that it was time. And I have never looked back.

My switch on was on 2 June 2022. To celebrate the new sensations, I stood under the trees in Kirstenbosch Gardens and looked up in absolute wonder. I was hearing birds chirping for the first time in close on 20 years. I had failed to understand what a silent world I had been living in, and how much of the richness of life is lost when you cannot hear. There was so much to take in: the sound of my bare feet on the floor; the sound of my cheek moving against my jacket; the sounds of birds, frogs and crickets; the sound of a whistle blowing; and the crispness of consonants in speech.

I am still at the start of my journey: my brain is still in the early phases of learning to process all of these new sounds, and I have had to make some significant changes in my life, particularly around contact sports. But when I pause to reflect on my journey, four months in, I am left with only one question: what took me so long to take the leap?

AMEERAH ZIMRI (NO 927)



Ameerah is 'n lieflike 3jarige dogtertjie. Sy was omtrent 2jaar toe ons agter gekom het dat sy nie reageer op sekere geluide nie. Haar woordeskat was min en ons het gedink sy het seker 'n spraakprobleem. Ons het 'n spraakterapeut gaan sien en sy het ons verwys na Worcester Hospitaal om 'n oudioloog te gaan sien.

Die oudioloog vir ons die nuus gegee. Ons vrees het waar geword. Ameerah is doof en ons harte het gevoel of dit wil breek. Sal sy ooit kan hoor en praat? Wat gaan van haar word? Sal sy ooit 'n normale lewe kan lei.

Ons is verwys na Tygerberg Hospitaal en het die bevestiging gekry dat sy het 'n bilaterale ernstig tot uitermatige gehoorverlies het. Sy het haar gehoorapparaat gekry en ons was so opgewonde, sy het begin huil toe sy my stem vir die eerste keer kon hoor.

Op 20 Oktober 2021 het ons by die CHAT sentrum aangekom. Die span ons ingelig dat Ameerah nie genoeg toegang tot klank met haar apparaat kry nie. Sy's verwys vir 'n kogleêre inplanting en op 23 Mei 2022 het sy haar eerste inplanting ontvang.

Vanaf die aanskakeling op 8 Junie 2022 het Ameerah ongelooflike vordering getoon. Ons werk hard en moes baie opoffer om ons familie te los en Kaap toe te trek, maar as ons nou terugkyk weet ons dat dit die beste besluit vir ons dogtertjie was. Ons is so trots op haar en kan nie wag om haar verder te sien ontwikkel nie.

ESTA VAN DER WESTHUIZEN (NO 928)



Ek het amper 10 jaar gelede my eerste gehoorapparaat begin dra. Ek moes ongelukkig gereeld sterker aparte kry, omdat my gehoor aangehou het om te versleg. Uiteindelik het my gehoor so versleg dat ek, ten spyte van die aparate, heeltemal afgesluit van die wêreld begin voel het. Ek kon nie gesprekke volg nie en het begin om myself uit geselskap te onttrek.

My oudioloog het voorgestel dat ek 'n kogleêre inplanting kry. Ek was maar senuwee-agtig. Die proses was lank, maar met die aanmoediging en insette van die kogleêre span by Tygerberg Hospitaal, het ek op 30 Mei 2022 my inplanting operasie ondergaan. Dit was 'n groot geskenk, want ek het op 31 Mei, 77 geword.

Van die eerste klanke by die aanskakeling van my proseseerder tot die wonderlike ervaring om weer gesprekke te kan volg en oor die telefoon te kan gesels slegs net 3 maande later, het al my verwagtinge oorskrei. Ek kan weer my wekker hoor tik en die voëls hoor sing buite. Dit was 'n totaal lewensveranderende wonderwerk.

Die geduld en toewyding van die spesiale groep mense wat hierdie ongelooflike werk doen sal ek nooit vergeet nie. Vir ewig dankbaar.

MAGGY FARNHAM (NO 929)



Ek is 58 jaar oud en sukkel al vir ongeveer 15 jaar met gehoorverlies wat met die verloop van tyd verder verswak het. Gehoorapparate het in die begin tot 'n mate gehelp. Ek het elke paar jaar nuwe apparate gekry met beter tegnologie, maar daar was nooit werklik 'n verskil nie. Selfs met die nuutste apparate wat beskikbaar was, was kommunikasie 'n groot gesukkel. Televisie en YouTube kyk, gaan fliek en uiteet met familie en vriende kon ek al vir 'n baie lang tyd nie meer doen nie.

As ek vandag terugkyk is ek baie spyt dat ek nie jare terug 'n kogleêre inplanting gekry het nie. Ek het my inplanting Junie 2022 gekry en vanaf die dag wat dit aangeskakel is, het dit 'n groot verskil gemaak in my lewe. Ek het nooit enige probleme gehad met die operasie of die toestel nie – vir 'n paar dae aan die begin het stemme “blikkerig” geklink maar dit het net 'n paar dae geneem voor alles duidelik en helder was. Ek is uiters tevrede met die resultate van my inplanting en wil net sê: “ASSEBLIEF MOET NIE UITSTEL NIE- LAAT DIT SO GOU AS MOONTLIK DOEN”

MARK WATSON (NO 931)



My journey of hearing loss has been a long one. I started wearing behind the ear aids in my early 30s and, now that I am in my 70s, hearing aids are of little use to me. Hence the start of a new journey towards a cochlear implant. I am presently in post-operative training. I have just passed a three months' milestone since the operation. How has that been? Well, exciting, frustrating, and definitely tiring!

I think much depends on one's expectations of the process. For me, I was aware that this would be a period of adjustment and readjustment, that the process would be slow and even challenging at times. Slowly then I have moved from the squeaky, Mickey Mouse voices in my ear to a closer approximation of the human voice. Slowly I have identified a range of environmental sounds that had been lost to me (“What's that sound?”, 'It's a bird flapping its wings'). Its early days and issues remain to be tackled: music, large group discussions. But, hey, things are vastly different. One's quality of life improves with one's quality of hearing. I am grateful that I have been the recipient of a cochlear implant, and grateful too for the support so necessary at a time like this.

DUDUZILE BEATRICE NKOMO (NO 933)



It all started in 2016 when I was diagnosed with meningitis, the journey has not been easy as I have been going to traditional healers as well as doctors only for them to tell me that they don't understand why I'm suffering from hearing loss.

About a year later I opted to get a hearing aid, hoping that I would be better, but it only worked for a month or two. After that attempt at getting my hearing back didn't work, I spent the next five years continuously trying home remedies as well as visiting doctors in hope and prayer that one day I'll be able to hear again.

In 2021 I was referred for a CI and on 6 June 2022 I went for an operation for a cochlear implant. Thanks to my wonderful surgeon and beautiful audiologist who gave me the opportunity to hear again, I have only had the cochlear for three months and I am already able to communicate with people. I am eternally grateful for what they have done for me.

NOMVIMBI MINI (NO 934)



I lost my hearing ability due to meningitis in 2007. On 27 June 2022 I had my cochlear implant operation which was a success. Since I had the implant, my life became easy and better.

I now can hear everything. I am no longer dependent on anyone to explain what has been said to me. I now have my privacy. I even can participate in the intercom at work and not wait for people to make decisions for me. I am able to listen to the radio and enjoy music, singing and dancing along!

HANNE MOLL CHRISTENSEN (NO 935)



My hearing disappeared little by little and one day Mr tinnitus arrived - loud and persistent like a mean ghost, right in front of Okavango River. I had been enjoying the beauty of the place until then. Later he moved into both ears - without being invited.

I was diagnosed with an acoustic neuroma in 2004 in my left ear. The name 'brain tumour' freaked me out and I contacted doctors and hospitals all over the world. I chose to go to Sweden for gamma knife treatment, and later I got a bone conduction hearing system in Denmark (where I come from). It did not work so well for long, and some years later we started talking about the possibility of getting a cochlear implant. We talked a lot. In Denmark as in the UK medical treatment is efficient, but sometimes the patient has died before it is their turn.

A number of years past, the pandemic did not help. Some years later some doctors disagreed, much later they thought they agreed, but we should still talk about it - again. I had gone to Cape Town to be with my husband.

Medical care can be expensive here, but it functions. The results from various tests done in Denmark was useful, and within a month I was operated. Impressive! When I left the hospital, my balance was better than usual.

It took some time before the sound processor was activated, but suddenly there was a sound - a weird sound, but an amazing sound. It was frogs that had moved into my head! They were singing and chatting endlessly.

One night when I slept, Mickey Mouse arrived and tried to kick out the frogs. Mickey talked and talked, but the frogs did not want to leave my ear, so they all talked at the same time, it was tiring and very lively in my ear. Mickey liked to imitate the birds, while the frogs were singing in the background.

One day the tinnitus disappeared - I was over the moon, but then he came sneaking back again. Another day it disappeared on the other ear for a short time, but it was just investigating life outside my ear before returning, but it still gave me hope.

It was not really MY ear any longer. She was her own and she could also be as a small child, who talked all the time, and she could even sing when I wanted to sleep.

When I listened to people speaking the sound started becoming less flat, there was more to it. It was happier. It was like with wine and perfume, there were more nuances. Perfumes and wines can have one layer, or they can be more complexed and interesting, like the sound in my ear.

One day I listened to some music and it was so beautiful and so different. I realised that I would have the part of my life back that I lost a very long time ago, and that was the best present I could ever get. I am very grateful to the people who helped me making my dream come true.

UKHONAYE MBANYANE (NO 941)



My son was born healthy and normal but when he was 7-8 months old, he got very sick and was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis. He was admitted to Red Cross Hospital where we stayed for 7 days. At first, they tested his ears, and they were fine, but at the follow-up test at about 3 months after, they told me that he is deaf and even hearing aids won't help him at all. My heart broke into 100 pieces, and I had no hope at all.

They recommended a cochlear implant and said that if I don't want him to have a cochlear implant then he is going to have to learn sign language. I ended up agreeing for him to be operated and everything was very quick because the meningitis could prevent the operation from being successful.

At switch-on when I saw my son responding to sound again, I was very excited. It is working wonders! After only two months with his cochlear implant, he even started to say mama and is responding to his name meaning there is still more to come.

I thank Tygerberg Hospital, the audiologist and each and every one who was there giving me advice. Without them my son would not be getting the second chance to hear again.

PROJECTS THAT INSPIRED US IN 2022:

Robben Island swim: MOVING FOR SOUND

– March 2022



Ed Tippet, joined together with fellow swimmers and Cochlear Implant users Mark Roach, Ivan du Toit and Kate Allwood, to swim 7.5km from Robben Island to Bloubergstrand in Cape Town on 5 March 2022. This involved months of swimming training all for the aim of raising awareness of hearing loss and cochlear implants, as well as raising funds for Hear Us. Ed and Mark swam the full distance, with Ivan and Kate swimming in relay. These four incredible individuals raised an amazing R50,000 for Hear Us. Ed says "There are many families who are unable to afford these surgeries and those who can, are often faced with various ongoing maintenance costs associated with these audio advancements. I wish to pay-it-forward, be a person of significance and help wherever possible to impact the lives of others".

Thanks must also go to Howard Warrington and Derek Frazer (planning and organising the boats on the day as experts in the Robben Island crossing), Sue Huggett (marketing of the event), and Sherene Labuschagne (updating live videos on social media).

Watch the swimmers in action on the day: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsSWi7eXel4&t=1s>

Fundraising on behalf of Charli Weiner

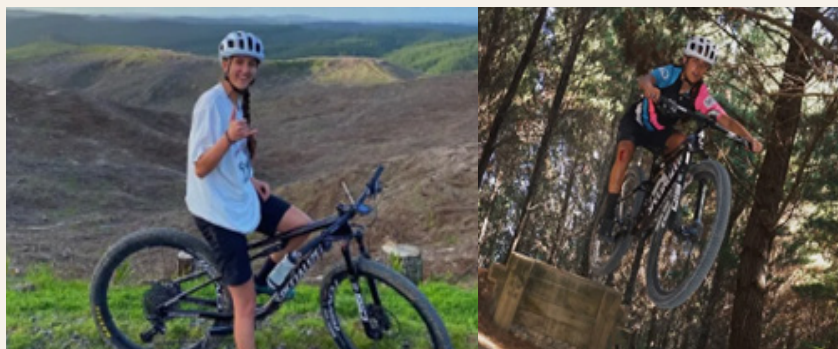


Charli Weiner was born in 2019 with profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss and received bilateral cochlear implants on 28 April 2020. Her mom Mia states that she has not stopped talking since speaking her first words at one-year old! Her parents were extremely grateful for the team at the Cochlear Implant Unit for helping them through this overwhelming process and have organised birthday fundraisers every year for Charli since then.

Additionally, this year her classmates at the Alon Ashel Pre-primary School donated a bag full of coins collected during a fundraiser event. Hear Us truly appreciates this support and we are so proud of this three-year old and her wonderful family for spreading awareness about cochlear implants!

TEENAGE CORNER

SKY'S THE LIMIT FOR MOUNTAIN-BIKING, CI-WEARING TEEN



Don't tell 17-year-old Emma Clipstone there's anything she can't do. She'll hear you but she won't listen.

Emma was born in South Africa at only 28 weeks and her deafness was likely caused by her prematurity. She received her first cochlear implant aged two and a half, and the second one 10 months later. Emma has been in mainstream schools since she was six years old. She and her family moved to New Zealand in 2016.

She is now attending Westlake Girls High School in Auckland and on the cusp of breaking into the international mountain biking circuit. Emma's love for biking began early, at the age of five when she started racing BMX. She tried mountain biking soon after and has never looked back.

While some might see deafness as adversity, Emma sees it as a minor setback that doesn't prevent her from pursuing her passions. For four consecutive years she's won her age categories in the Auckland School Series mountain biking competition, taking out the under 15, under 17, and under 20 female titles.

This year she's added North Island Secondary School Cyclocross Champion to her titles.

She says the 2021 nationals was an incredible event, "the course was almost like a world cup circuit, really technical. There was a gap jump and rock gardens." This positive attitude and willingness to tackle challenges is one that Emma has carried through her life. "I love trying all sports. I've done gymnastics, even with my 'cochlears'. I use wig tape and I put my hair over my coils so they wouldn't fall off."

Being able to hear and communicate with her cochlear implants has fostered her love of riding, she says. "One of my closest friends who I race with is from Taupō. I can talk with her when we do our warm-up together. "I also really love riding in nature. I love hearing all of the different sounds. That's why cochlears are so nice."

She says people often assume that children with disabilities aren't going to be as good at sports as their mainstream peers but being deaf has never stopped her.

Her advice to others facing adversity? "Don't listen to anyone who has an opinion you don't like. You do you and give it a go."

For the full article, please visit: <https://www.hearinghouse.co.nz/single-post/sky-s-the-limit-for-mountain-biking-ci-wearing-teen>

GREEN POINT TEENAGER PICNIC 2022



For many years the Tygerberg Hospital Cochlear Implant Unit has been hosting support group events, bringing together a diverse group of teenage cochlear implant recipients.

On April 1st this year, we hosted our annual teenage day at the beautiful Green Point Park. A group of 16 teenagers attending different schools came together to celebrate their youth and network with other like-minded teens. The team could not have wished for a better turn out, with the sun shining warmly, perfect for a picnic. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed connecting and sharing their personal experiences and future aspirations while tucking into their packed picnic baskets.

Interactive games were played, and friendships were formed.

The team at Tygerberg are so proud, many of these teens were faced with many obstacles growing up, despite the challenges faced they were able to persevere through the hardships

CONGRATULATIONS



KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR ABU-BAKR's AWARD WINNING FILM

Abu-Bakr Da Costa is a bilaterally implanted cochlear implant user who is currently studying film. He was in Carel du Toit School and thereafter attended public mainstream schools. Abu-Bakr competed in a 48-hour film challenge where he was chosen as the director. Their film was voted the Instagram favourite and nominated for an award.

Congratulations Abu-Bakr!

TYGERBERG HOSPITAL BIDS PROF LOOCK FAREWELL

Prof Loock has implanted more than 200 recipients as part of the Tygerberg Hospital-Stellenbosch University Cochlear Implant Unit from 2000 to 2022. He is known for his exceptional skill and dedication in providing his patients with the gift of hearing. He retired as the Head of ENT Department at Stellenbosch University in August 2022 and will be greatly missed at Tygerberg Hospital. We want to thank him for the decades of his leadership, guidance, and compassionate care for our patients. Luckily, he will still be part of our team in a private capacity operating from N1City Netcare Hospital.



NEW STAFF MEMBER: MARGE VAN DYK



If you see a new face in our corridors, that might be audiologist, Marge van Dyk.

She joined our team in March 2022. Marge is originally from Pretoria but has traded the Jacarandas for the vineyards and loving her new home here in Cape Town.

"Working at Tygerberg Hospital's CI Unit has been a dream of mine. It has been a lovely journey so far and I am enjoying meeting and serving so many beautiful patients and their families and working with the best team ever!"

Please pop into her office (Room 22) on your next visit to the unit and say hi!

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the passing of the following implantees during 2022:

Jenever van Rooyen (No 294)



Born: 5 March 1973
Received her CI **12 March 2007**
† *February 2022*

Moragh Paxton (No 719)



Born: 9 March 1950
Received her CI **23 March 2018**
† *6 October 2022*

Robin Castell (No 615)



Born: 12 July 1941
Received his CI **29 February 2016**
† *28 June 2022*

Abraham Jarvis (No 480)



Born: 18 July 1962
Received his CI **28 February 2013**
† *16 August 2022*

Andile P Xintolo (No 520)



Born: 16 January 1971
Received his CI **5 December 2013**
† *2020*

IN MEMORIAM



A SOUTH AFRICAN COCHLEAR IMPLANT ASSOCIATION

HearUs is a registered and regulated non-profit organisation and operates in close association with the Tygerberg Hospital – Stellenbosch University Cochlear Implant Unit. **More donations are needed to assist those in need.**

Donations to HearUs can be sent to:

Account holder: HearUs

Bank: ABSA

Branch: Durbanville

Branch code: 632005

Account number: 4053388469

Swift code: ABSA ZA JJ

E-mail: hearusnpo@gmail.com

www.hearus.org.za

Make a difference, donate, and give someone the gift of hearing via SnapScan:



Follow us on social media:

@HearUsZa

@Hearus_cochlearimplants_za

MySchool is a fundraising programme able to raise funds for various charities and schools including HearUs.

By listing HearUs as a beneficiary on your MySchool card you will automatically raise funds for HearUs when swiping your card at participating stores.

Scan to support us



Charitable bequests: leave a lasting legacy

A charitable bequest is a donation from your deceased estate to a charity/charitable organisation as specified in your will.

Should you wish to acquire further information about bequeathing donations to HearUs as a beneficiary please contact Lida Müller: amum@sun.ac.za/021 938 5080.

WHATSAPP / SMS NUMBER:

076 387 7227

Please remember to use our WhatsApp/SMS line to contact your audiologist based at Tygerberg Hospital for your cochlear implant related enquiries.

Things to keep in mind when using this number:

- Please remember to always say who you are, who your mapping audiologist is and why you are contacting us in your message.
- This number can only receive SMS/WhatsApp messages, you cannot call this number.
- Only in use on weekdays during work hours only, not in use on weekends/public holidays.