



Newsletter for Adult Cochlear Implant Recipients

December 2018

Welcome to our first Hearing House newsletter. The adult program has been based at The Hearing House for almost one year and we are excited to have a number of projects coming up. Keep an eye out on future newsletters and please do let us know if there is anything specific you want to know about.

Funding update

In the 2017-2018 financial year the adult team implanted 50 people (which is 30 over the normal base volume) thanks to a one off public funding boost. This was achieved while the program was transitioning to a new contract provider – The Hearing House. In addition 2 adults received special funding for ABIs (Brainstem implants) and 30 adults managed to fund themselves. A total of 72 adults were implanted - this is a record and it's no wonder it was an amazingly busy year for the adult team!

Of those publically implanted, 94% reported substantial improvement in their quality of life and socialisation during the time from switch on to the end of the financial year. Looking at the satisfaction survey only 2.4% of our total case load expressed dissatisfaction with our service. The reasons for this were mainly out of our control (lack of funding for first or binaural implants, lack of cover for spare parts and lack of adult outreach programs) as these issues were funding related.

Looking forward, the programs main concern is with the increasing number of implanted clients with additional needs. The team is now supporting a lot of people with mobility and cognitive issues which adds another dimension and has meant that outreach and remote programming services are now essential to this program. Thanks to an additional service related funding in the 2018-2019 year our plans for outreach have developed nicely. With the additional funds we were able to employ a part time administrator whose main job is to manage outreach clinics. In the next year the team will be visiting Whangarei, Hamilton, Tauranga and Rotorua. While we plan on visiting each region twice a year, the numbers of people in these regions is quite high. Because of this we do not expect to be able to see all adults in these regions in the first year so the service will be targeted to those who need it most. We will keep you updated on this development.

In the 2019 year the team plans on starting remote mapping and testing (where the client is seen via computerised Skype type connection whilst the clinician is based in Auckland). This should enable those who cannot get to Auckland or cannot access the outreach clinics to be seen much easier.

At this stage we do not expect to receive more than the 20 base implants that we are allocated yearly so will be putting a lot more focus on getting the outreach and remote programming clinics up and running.

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Adult Cochlear Implant - Emergency Christmas Cover

The Hearing House will close for the festive season on Thursday 20th December, 2018 at 4pm and reopen on Monday 7th January 2019, at 8am.

If there is a technical emergency with your equipment between 21st December and 4th January please **email** adultci@hearinghouse.co.nz or **text 021 492 241**. Staff will be available to talk with you and manage any issues relating to your device, loaners and/or parts.

Please be aware that staff will **not be available on statutory holidays and weekends**, so if you call at these times please leave a message. We will be in contact as soon as possible after these days.

It's important you ensure you have sufficient batteries and spare parts **before** Christmas, so please either place an order through the Cochlear online store or contact The Hearing House reception (09 579 2333) by **Monday 10th December, 2018**.

Christmas emergency contact number 021 492 241

Christmas emergency email adultci@auckland.ac.nz



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Manufacturer's News



Experience the benefits of hearing with both ears - special dual processor promotional offer

For a limited time people who are getting their second ear implanted can take advantage of Cochlear Ltd's special offer, of TWO Nucleus®7 Sound Processors when you purchase a Cochlear™ implant system.

To take advantage of this offer contact The Hearing House.



Staff Changes

Dawn Thompson

Dawn qualified as a Registered Nurse in London, gaining a Post Graduate Diploma in Critical Care, specialising in Intensive Care and Emergency Nursing. This was followed by travel and a move to NZ. Following children she made the move to outpatient clinics. She enjoys working in a health care setting and being a part of the client's journey. Dawn is working part time as an Administrator for the Adult Cochlear Implant Programme at The Hearing House.



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Repairs, Replacements and Upgrades of Speech Processors

At switch-on, cochlear implant recipients are issued with a “kit” for the external processor with extra parts that we expect will be needed in the first year to two. Over the life of the processor some pieces of equipment will need replacing and unfortunately parts outside of warranty are not covered by the Ministry of Health. (Children have these costs funded by the Ministry of Health until 19 years; those over 19 years are required to fund these themselves). Speech processors also have a limited warranty that is anywhere from 3-5 years. Repairs outside of the warranty period are also not covered by the public program. Currently, for processors outside of the warranty period there is a standard repair by replacement charge - \$500 including GST.

While we do our best to provide loan equipment in emergencies, the public program is not able to provide replacement speech processors when they have been lost or damaged. Because of this please make sure that your processor is covered by insurance. For those whose processors are getting old, the Ministry of Health service specification states that speech processors will be replaced “within available funding when a person’s speech processor is deemed to be uneconomical for repair”.

When old speech processors are replaced, (unless they were paid for by the patient themselves) we would appreciate it if all old equipment is returned to the Northern Cochlear Implant Programme to be used as second hand stock or loan devices.

Paying for Repairs, Parts and Accessories

Do you find that you struggle to pay for repairs or replacement parts/processors when you need them? Please talk with your clinician about the available options.

- Disability allowance
- Insurance
- Work and Income
- New Zealand Lotteries Commission
- Workbridge
- Financial loans

Troubleshooting Your Device

If you experience problems with your device we advise you to have a look at the “troubleshooting” information on the Cochlear Ltd, MED-EL and Advanced Bionics web-sites.

<http://www.cochlear.com/wps/wcm/connect/au/home/support/how-to-guides>

<https://www.medel.com/ca/troubleshooting/>

<https://advancedbionics.com/nz/en/home/support/troubleshooting-guide.html>

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Annual Reviews

If you need to book your annual review please remember to bring to your audiology appointment:

Remote Assistant (Cochlear Ltd devices) or Fine Tuner (MED-EL)

Please bring your remote control to all appointments. Periodically we need to update the software on this device. It is also useful for troubleshooting any issues. If your processor needs repair then the replacement will also need to be “paired” with your remote control.

Microphone Protectors

We recommend replacing these every 3 months according to manufacturer guidelines (perhaps sooner if you work in a particularly dusty or humid environment). We are happy to replace these during your clinic appointment, and encourage you to bring a pack with you so we can demonstrate how to change them. You may feel more confident changing them yourself once we have shown you the procedure in clinic. There is also a helpful instructional video on Cochlear Ltd's website.

Batteries for your hearing aid (if you wear one in your non-implanted ear)

It is beneficial to balance the sound from your two ears (cochlear implant and hearing aid – if you wear one) during Mapping appointments, therefore we ask that you please bring a spare battery for your hearing aid to ensure this device is functioning optimally when you come to the clinic.

Spare processor (if you have one, such as a RONDO or KANSO)

We encourage you to bring both devices with you to all appointments, so we can programme copies of your MAPs to both processors, so you have a back-up device (should you require it).

Any equipment which you have questions about

There may be equipment you were issued at switch-on which you need further information on or instructions as to its purpose. We encourage you to bring such items along so we can assist with any queries.

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MRI Procedures

All newer electrode arrays are MRI compatible but it is important that the correct procedure is followed when having an MRI scan to limit the risk of bruising or the magnet shifting. Prior to an MRI the Adult Cochlear Implant Programme must be contacted to provide the most up to date information on protocols and to double check that you do have an electrode array that is MRI compatible. After the MRI the electrode must be checked by a CI audiologist/or ENT to make sure that the magnet has not shifted.

MedicAlert

In an emergency, radiologists may not have the time to contact the Adult Cochlear Implant Programme to get information on MRI compatibility. You can consider a MedicAlert, or other alerting bracelets, for emergencies. We suggest that the bracelet says the name of the electrode and if it is/isn't MRI compatible. Radiologists can then search their data base, or online, for the relevant information.



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Patient story - Renewed confidence and desire to socialise



Kay Bloomfield-Bevin was 30 when she suddenly lost her hearing. But that wasn't the only thing she lost.

Her hearing loss affected her relationships, she became a recluse and in the coming years it resulted in the breakdown of her marriage.

Twenty-one years later she got her first cochlear implant – her world has changed so much she wishes she'd done it sooner.

Kay and her husband were share milkers in Eltham, Taranaki. She had a 9-year-old daughter and a 2-year-old son.

One day when she was working on the farm she cut her arm. That's when everything changed.

Kay, now 60, was “deaf as a post” within days of a medical misadventure.

“It happened really quickly. I just went downhill, fast. Everything sounded strange. We had visitors and I thought everything sounded tinny. The next day it was almost all gone.

“It was horrible....horrible.”

Kay says her initial reaction was to just get stuck in and carry on with life.

“I kept milking and farming. I just kept going.

“It doesn't really hit you until way down the line. The reality hits that you are deaf. I remember crying my eyes out in the milking shed three years later.”

Kay couldn't communicate with people so life became very isolated for her. She stopped her role as a dressage judge, she couldn't attend meetings, school concerts or socialise with her friends.

“I was a real recluse. I never stepped out anywhere.”

She did, however, join an adult riding group.

“When I lost my hearing I took up riding because I had nothing else. I went back to riding – in fact I thank my hearing loss for that. Every cloud has a silver lining.

“They were so good to me. While I was on a horse I didn't need to talk to people. The people I knew before....they really struggled with me.”

Kay says her hearing loss was particularly hard on her daughter.

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“My son grew up with me being deaf, but my daughter was nine. I used to talk to my daughter all the time. But then I couldn’t.

“There was frustration on both sides – I couldn’t hear and I got the words mixed up. I misinterpreted her words, I was on the wrong track and she would have been frustrated as well.”

Kay was 51 when she got her first cochlear implant, funded through ACC.

“I dragged my feet big time because I had no idea what I’d get out of it. I was really frightened. In the end I thought, ‘what have I got to lose?’. My sister supported me and pushed me.”

Kay remembers walking up One Tree Hill in Auckland the day her implant was switched on. In an effort to help her get used to the new sound she counted her steps and kept repeating the numbers until she recognised the sound. It didn’t take her long at all to get used to it.

“It was amazing. Absolutely amazing. All I wanted to do was talk to people and talk on the phone.

“I couldn’t believe what I had missed out on. That first implant was a real step forward.

“I had to learn to be social again. I’d forgotten how to socialise.”

This new lease on life enabled Kay to return to dressage judging.

“It gave me the boost I needed.”

Kay received her second implant in June 2018. This one took a little longer for her to adjust to, but she hasn’t looked back.

“I can hear people without looking at them. I can walk down the road and know there is a vehicle behind me. I can get the direction of sound now. I wish I’d done it ages ago.”

She has also noticed she is no longer so reliant on other people to help her, or do things for her.

Kay says that following her surgeries, the death of her mother earlier in 2018 and the sale of her family home she is now getting back into things.

“I’m at that place of saying ‘now where do I go?’.

“I’m much much much, 100 per cent, 200 per cent more confident.”

Kay has also been able to go on her first overseas holiday.

“I never would have gone to Rarotonga if I didn’t have a cochlear implant.”

Kay says staff from the adult cochlear implant team at The Hearing House have been “marvellous” and she encourages anyone contemplating getting cochlear implants to go ahead.

“They don’t realise what they are missing out on.”