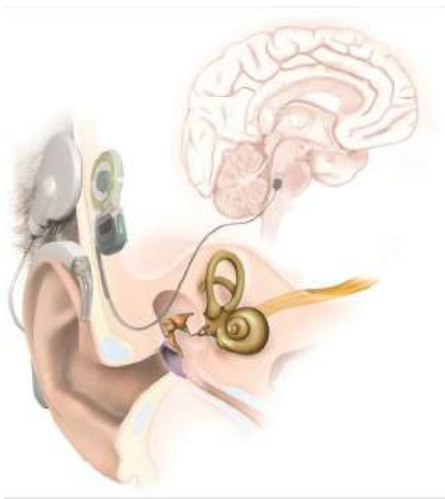


FIRST AUDITORY BRAINSTEM IMPLANTS (ABIs) IN WESTERN CAPE



An Auditory Brainstem Implant (ABI) is an electronic device designed to restore a sense of sound for patients with a bilateral profound hearing loss who cannot benefit from a cochlear implant (CI) due to damaged /absent cochleae/cochleae nerves. They offer a chance of hearing for a small specific group of patients who would otherwise have no chance of hearing at all.

Similar in design and function to a CI, an ABI is made up of two parts: an electrode array which is surgically placed internally and a sound processor which is worn externally. While the electrode array of a CI is placed in the cochlea (inner ear), the electrode paddle of an ABI is placed higher up in the auditory pathway on the cochlear nucleus, the part of the brain that usually receives sound input. An ABI bypasses the inner ear and cochlear nerve and stimulates the sound pathways in the brain directly.

The first ABI was implanted in 1979 at the House Ear Institute in Los Angeles and in 2000 the first child received an ABI. ABIs are far rarer than CIs with an estimated 1000-1500 cases worldwide (compared to hundreds of thousands of CIs), the majority of which are adult patients with Neuro Fibromatosis Type II (NF2). The number of children receiving ABIs worldwide is very small but increasing.

The outcomes vary between patients and are difficult to predict. Most patients become aware of environmental sounds. The ABI helps adults lip-read better aiding their speech understanding and can help children develop sound and speech awareness. Greater time and more intensive rehabilitation are needed for patients to adjust to the sound from an ABI in comparison to a CI.



In 2016 an ABI team was established at the Johannesburg Cochlear Implant Centre (JCIC) under the auspices of the South African Cochlear Implant Group (SACIG). In 2019 a second ABI team was established as part of the Tygerberg Hospital-Stellenbosch University Cochlear Implant Program (TBH-SU CIP), to expand the geographical reach of the service in South Africa. The teams work in close collaboration with each other.

In 2025 the TBH-SU Team undertook its first ABI surgeries. It was a busy challenging year full of learning. Two adults with NF2 were implanted in January 2025 (one at Christiaan Barnard Hospital, one at Tygerberg Hospital) with activation in April. The first child (2 years) to be implanted in South Africa underwent surgery in October at Tygerberg Hospital, with device activation in December.

The ABI team collaborated closely with international experts and the JCIC team for the surgeries and activations. Many different medical professionals including Neurosurgery, ENT, Radiology, Anaesthesiology, Audiology, Neurophysiology, Nursing and Paediatrics worked together in the management of the patients.

The activation of an ABI requires medical monitoring in high care/ICU for adults and in theatre for children. Patients are then seen regularly by their audiologists for programming and monitoring of their progress. Listening training is needed to help optimise communication. Children and their parents/caregivers are seen regularly by their speech language therapist for communication therapy.

The TBH-SU ABI team comprises: Neurosurgeon: Dr David Roytowski, ENT Surgeons: Dr Gary Kroukamp & Dr Marc Merven, Audiologists: Gill Kerr (Coordinator), Suryn Lombaard, Deidrè Stroebel and Jenny Perold, Radiologists: Dr Elias Pretorius, Dr Christelle Ackermann, Oncologist: Dr Sarah Fairhead and Speech and Language Therapist: Jenni Bester.



The stories below are excerpts from our patient and parents' stories - their full stories are kept together with their photograph in digital format 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 digital formaat by die Kogleêre Inplantingseenheid. Al die pasiënte het hulle families, vriende en die Tygerberg Hospitaal Kogleêre Inplantingseenheid bedank vir die ondersteuning wat hulle ontvang het tydens die inplantingsproses. Baie pasiënte gee ook alle eer aan God.

/// ANDRÉ GOTTSCH (ABI RECIPIENT)



I am grateful for the chance to tell others about my journey and how the auditory brainstem implant (ABI) has changed my life.

I worked as a fitter and turner when I started to lose my hearing. It became too dangerous to continue with my work and I was placed on medical pension and moved to live with my parents when I was 36 years old.

In 2002, I received my first auditory brainstem implant in Bloemfontein. Professors Robert Behr from Germany and professor Andre Claassen performed the operation at Universitas Hospital. That implant stopped working after 20 years and had to be replaced. Professor Behr supported his South African colleagues again and

placed a new ABI in January 2025. I am deeply thankful to all of them, and to many others along the way – I would need a whole book to write all names of those who have helped me.

Today, I can hear much better which has changed my life completely. I am no longer cut off from the world. The new sounds I experience everyday are wonderful, and I especially enjoy listening to music again.

This journey has been long, but it has given me resilience, gratitude and a renewed sense of independence. I am thankful to Tygerberg Hospital and everyone who has supported me, and I hope my story can encourage others who may be considering this path.

CORNELIA ROBB (NO 988) ///

I am 68 years old and have neurosarcoidosis, which is a rare and difficult condition to diagnose. When I was 40 years old, I started developing constant headaches and started going from doctor to doctor, to no avail. I had a full-time job and living in the countryside, it was difficult to get to Cape Town to see specialists. Things started to change when I started developing the other symptoms of neurosarcoidosis, such as visual impairment, Bell's Palsy and Meningitis. It is an unpredictable disease, that can attack any part of the central nervous system, at any time. In 2008, I lost all hearing in my right ear, due to a lesion forming on the auditory nerve going to the auditory cortex in the brain.

Due to the way in which my hearing on the right was lost, I found it difficult to believe that a Cochlear implant will produce sound. I never had the time or funds to invest in a Cochlear implant, until after COVID, when the medical aid criteria changed and I qualified.

I had my Cochlear fitted and activated middle 2023. Initially I struggled, especially as my brain had to develop new paths to interpret the sounds, but now my Cochlear is part of my daily life. It is still mind blowing to me that I can hear with my right ear.

I am grateful to the caring team at Tygerberg Hospital for their kindness and knowledge and always going the extra mile to accommodate me.





The incidence of sudden single-sided deafness (SSD) varies from 5 to 20 per 100000 of the population. In the majority of these cases, the cause is unknown. I became part of this statistic at the age of 63 years.

Fortuitously, one of our daughters rotated through the Ear, Nose and Throat department at Tygerberg Hospital (TBH) as part of her medical training soon after this incident and that is how I got to know my audiologist. She very ably assisted me in negotiating the various treatment options available and monitoring the state of my "hearing" ear. We eventually settled for CROS hearing aids. Cochlear Implantation (CI) was not considered for SSD at that stage.

When the criteria changed and CI's were considered for management of SSD, my audiologist contacted me and after thorough evaluation to determine whether I might benefit, I received my right-sided CI in November 2023, 10 years and 6 months after my hearing loss.

Among the many observations I made in the process of getting accustomed to the apparatus after activation in January 2023, I can highlight a few:

1. Speech initially sounded like high-pitched chipmunks whispering! The speech sounded at a higher "pitch" as what I was accustomed to with normal speech. Although my left ear is also impaired by loss of high frequency sounds (so technically I've got asymmetrical hearing loss), having a hearing aid in my left ear allowed me to integrate speech sounds – this seems to have allowed my brain to make much more sense from the sounds that initially sounded so funny. My perception of speech in quiet environments has been restored to pre-SSD days; but as many may note, although I'm able to "focus" the setting on my CI and adjust the left hearing aid for noisy environments, I've noticed that I still have to significantly rely on lip-reading in those circumstances.
2. The CI processor seems to be much more sensitive than the hearing aid on the left or even my normal hearing before the hearing impairment. For instance, I could hear footsteps from somebody walking at the Eastern end of the fifth floor E.N.T. passage whilst standing at the Western end of this passage – this was a first for me! It was the furthest I've ever heard footsteps! Another instance where I noticed something unusual was the fact that I could hear the clicking sound that my car's indicator lights made through the CI side only! I can't remember when last I heard this sound...
3. Music. I've resigned myself to the fact that I will never again hear stereo sound as I used to. However, the CI picks up high frequency sounds such as brushes on side drums and high-pitched sounds such as from piccolos in symphony orchestra music. So stereo sound has been restored to a certain extent; the CI filling in the sounds lost through the loss of high frequency sound in the left ear, allowing me to appreciate it much more than before. And what is encouraging, is that there's still subtle improvement over time.

All in all, this procedure has enhanced my quality of life significantly. I'm extremely grateful to the people that played a part in filling the void which I experienced due to the loss of hearing in my right ear. I cannot thank the team enough for their excellent and professional support in managing the whole process as well as Discovery Medical Aid for their financial support.

FRANCOIS VAN DEN HEEVER (NO 1024)

I am 38 years old and currently living in Cape Town. My mother had German measles during her pregnancy with me which caused my deafness.

At the age of 3, I went to De La Bat School, where I learned to lip-read and tried my best to hear and speak. I used hearing aids in both ears. From the age of 3 to 16, I used my hearing aid in my right ear all the time, and I eventually stopped wearing my left hearing aid.

When I was 21, my mother and I talked about going to Tygerberg Hospital to find out again if I could get a cochlear implant. I told her I didn't want to do it then, because I was studying to be a chef.

When I was around 30, one of my friends told me that I spoke very well and asked why I couldn't get a cochlear implant as it might help me to hear and speak even better. I told my friend I didn't know if I could.

When I was 37, I finally made the decision to pursue the cochlear implant and started finding out who I needed to speak to. I met my audiologist and shared my whole life story with her – everything from my heart. She truly cared and never gave up on me, and she supported me through every step. I got the good news that I was approved for a cochlear implant.

I was very scared of the surgery, but the team helped me through all the tests and every part of the process. Early in 2024, I had my surgery, and one month later I was switched on. I have not regretted this decision for a single day.

I was born deaf and grew up without real hearing. Now, at 38 years old, after receiving my cochlear implant in 2024, I am so grateful for how much better I can hear. I hear things I never expected in my life – and it has changed me in ways I cannot describe.



BRADLEY MCCALLUM (NO 1030)



When I was 3 years old my parents noticed I was always turning my right ear toward them when they spoke to me and often requested people to repeat themselves.

Unfortunately, it was concluded that I had severe, irreparable nerve damage in my left ear which had resulted in complete hearing loss for which there was no remedy. The years that followed were characterised by adapting to the impairment and trying to adjust my environment to be as accommodating of the disadvantage as possible. I did well in this regard, and while it presented its difficulties, I still managed to live a decently socially integrated life. But it would not be the end of my hearing woes...

Sometime during my grade 7 year, I contracted a severe ear infection in my right ear. The infection decimated my available hearing, luckily it was only for a short period of time. With the help of aggressive cortisone treatment, I was able to recover 50-60% of my hearing in my right ear. It was at this time that I had my first experience with traditional hearing aids, but it was a difficult adjustment. Aside from the adaption required to the hearing experience with a hearing aid, there was also the stigma associated with unsightly hearing devices and the plight it presented for this young boy and his daily interactions with other kids. I decided I'd rather put up with the challenging hearing impairment than deal with the drawbacks of the hearing aid.

At 28 years old, I had severe pneumonia and struggled to breathe. I was rushed to hospital and later discovered I had sudden and total sensorineural hearing loss, a loss that would become permanent. There was no response to extensive cortisone treatment. I was officially medically completely deaf.

Not losing hope, I found the CI program at Tygerberg Hospital and began my cochlear implant journey. Although I approached the idea with a "nothing to lose" mentality, I was, like every other person in this position, unsure if the outcome would be positive or if I would ever be able to adjust to life with the implant.

I can say with absolute gratitude in my heart, that I cannot imagine my life without my implant, it's allowed a normalcy to be returned to my life, frankly at levels I had never experienced before. In ways, the implant has given me a hearing experience that I've never benefitted from at any stage through my life. I am truly grateful to the exceptional team at Tygerberg for being instrumental in the provision of this privilege, it has changed mine, and thousands of other people's lives in ways that are truly indescribable.

GAUDENCIA TIRIVANHU (NO 1035)

In 2015, I was working as a waitress when I suddenly developed a terrible headache that led to my hospitalization. I was admitted to Hospital and diagnosed with TB Meningitis. It was during this time that I experienced hearing loss. I woke up one morning to the sound of ringing, like birds chirping, but didn't think much of it. It was until visiting hours that I realized I couldn't hear anything. That was a traumatic experience, and I became withdrawn, wanting to be alone.



I could not continue with my job. Struggling to make ends meet, I faced a new challenge: putting food on the table. Simple tasks like going to the market became daunting, as I relied on lip-reading and gestures to communicate. My inability to hear made everyday life an exhausting struggle.

I isolated myself, unable to communicate with loved ones. I felt like a burden and became depressed.

In 2020, I gave birth to a baby girl, who brought light to my life. As she grew older, communicating with her was challenging, and I worried about her tantrums.

Last year, I was told about cochlear implant surgery, and I was hopeful but scared. The surgery was a success, and when the implant was activated, I was overwhelmed with emotion. I could hear my child's voice, and it was priceless.

I'm now working and have completed my Diploma in Development and Education in Early Childhood. I'm grateful to the Cochlear Implant Team for giving me back my life.

PETE FERREIRA (NO 1068)



I started wearing hearing aids in 2004 after I discovered that I could not hear clearly anymore.

In 2018, an audiologist tested me and suggested that I could be a CI candidate. I was assessed by the Johannesburg Cochlear Implant Centre who confirmed that I could indeed be a candidate.

As I was still working full time at this time, I was apprehensive about following through with the recommendation. I thought it would put me 'out of action' in the terms of my work, for an extended period of time. By 2023 however, even the latest top-of-the-range hearing aids were no longer adequate.

In 2024, with the support of my wife, I began my journey into CI, what an amazing life-changing experience! My words to my audiologist at switch-on were something along the lines of, "for the first time in 20 plus years, I can hear full words!" It was a truly memorable experience.

I received a sequential implant for my second ear shortly after. The scope and range of my hearing with CI is vastly superior to what it was with wearing hearing aids. What a positive difference it has made in our lives! Our grateful thanks to the team and the technology available to us.

JUHA DUNCAN (NO 1072)



Our Juha was born with Bilateral Choanal Atresia (a deformity in of his nose influencing breathing) and Tygerberg hospital was great at saving his life at birth.

He spent 3 weeks in hospital and 2 operations later; we thought that we were out of the woods.

At 4 months of age he was however diagnosed with bilateral profound deafness. This broke our hearts. We had little to no hope as first-time parents. Nothing can prepare you for news like that.

We were referred to the Cochlear Implant Unit at Tygerberg Hospital where we were informed that Juha could get a Cochlear implant and we were overjoyed with this news.

We started to see the light and regained all hope for our son's future. Therapy was arranged and we spent months with appointments and finally it happened! Juha received his life changing operation and started hearing.

Juha has now used his implant for a year and laughs when he hears funny noises. He loves music and sings along in his own way. He babbles and mimics too! We have so much hope and faith that our son is and will continue to prosper in life with the happiness he receives from a WORLD WITH SOUND! Thank you to the Tygerberg Hospital team for saving our son and giving him his hearing.

SINOMTHA MAYILE (NO 1076)

Sinomtha was born a healthy baby with no complications. However, when she was 6 months old, she contracted TB and underwent treatment for 6 months, after which she recovered.

Her early childhood development progressed well, and she was able to hear and speak. She attended a multilingual crèche; but after a couple of months, we noticed that she was not actively speaking as usual, and we thought maybe she was confused because of the 3 languages she was doing at crèche.

We went to see a speech therapist as her speech dropped drastically from calling everyone by their names or repeating words to saying one word or nothing at all. We also indicated to the speech therapist that sometimes when we communicate with her, she does not respond.

We were referred to the audiologist; tests were done, but she failed the test. Sinomtha was diagnosed at Red Cross Hospital with a profound hearing loss in both ears. The results came as a shock and sad news for all of us because we were not expecting to hear that.

We were referred to CHAT Centre at Carel du Toit and Tygerberg Hospital, where we got assistance and everything was explained. We became hopeful after knowing there is a device that can help her hear again, and we had to be strong for her. Sinomtha was implanted with a cochlear implant, even though there were some complications at first, it was a success.

2025 has been a wonderful year for us all; she began attending Carel du Toit school and has made significant improvement in her hearing and speaking; she can hear and say some words, and she is beginning to sing as well. I am grateful that we took the steps necessary to get her the help she required, and I would like to thank everyone who was involved.



KEVIN ALBUTT (NO 1077)



The sights and sounds are some of the things in life that we take for granted, for those that don't have this privilege. It's a bucket list, but you only realize what you're missing when it gets taken away.

My cochlear implant has given me a new lease on life, I can hear birds chirping away, the sound of a dog barking, the faint sound of someone typing on their cell phone, an indicator going tick-tick-tick on my car. I lost all of this, and thanks to the Tygerberg CI Team, I can hear again.

BUSISWA NTSINI (NO 1079)

When I was only using a hearing aid, I wasn't able to hear myself when I speak with people. Some would say I'm shouting at them; some didn't hear me.

After 13 years, I received my Cochlear and I can now control my voice, and it is so much easier to understand when people communicate with me. I've gained my confidence back and in public places I'm no longer bothering people. I communicate by myself without interpretation; many things have improved in my life!



BUNONO QUTWA (NO 1081)



Bunono was born deaf, probably because he was very premature and at risk of complications. I accepted his disability because I've been taught about hearing loss and I attended counselling.

The reason why I wanted the cochlear implant was because he was not benefiting from hearing aids. It has been a good experience. Bunono can now mimic words and just after 2 weeks of his switch on he was already turning whenever someone calls his name and copying whatever I am saying.

He's now been hearing for 10 months and there are words that he can say and understand. The most beautiful thing is how he can differentiate when the Cochlear Implant is on and when it's off. If the coil falls, he will quickly put it back and say something to himself so that he can be sure it's on.

The cochlear implant is just the start of the journey - I attend therapy sessions every week at the CHAT Centre where I am helping Bunono learn how to listen and speak with his cochlear implant. People think that you get a cochlear implant and the child can hear and talk immediately. It's only the start of a long journey.

He will also start school at Carel Du Toit when he is 2 1/2 to carry on learning to speak well.

LINWILL PARSON (NO 1082)

'n Lig Wat Weer Begin Skyn: Linwill se Reis na Gehoor en Hoop.

Toe klein Linwill gebore is, was hy die prentjie van 'n gesonde, gelukkige baba. Sy glimlag het ons huis gevul met warmte, en sy teenwoordigheid het soos 'n sagte sonstraal elke dag ligter gemaak. Maar namate hy ouer geword het, het ek begin opmerk dat sy spraak stadiger ontwikkel as ander kinders s'n. Iets in 'n moeder se hart weet altyd wanneer daar meer skuil agter woorde wat nie kom nie.

So het 'n reis begin wat ons van dokter na dokter geneem het — wagkamers vol hoop, kamers vol teleurstelling, en telkens dieselfde trooswoorde: "Hy ontwikkel net stadiger." Tog het my instink my nooit laat rus nie. Ek het geweet daar is 'n rede, en ek was vasbeslote om dit te vind.



Uiteindelik het ek Linwill na 'n spraakterapeut geneem en versoek dat sy gehoor getoets word. Dit was daardie dag, in daardie vertrek, dat ons wêreld vir 'n oomblik stil gaan staan het. Die resultate was duidelik: Linwill het bilaterale gehoorverlies — doofheid in albei ore.

Skielik het soveel dinge sin begin maak. Die stiltetjies, die vae reaksies, die woorde wat nie wou vorm nie. My seun het nie stadig ontwikkel nie, hy het eenvoudig nie gehoor nie.

Ons het met gehoorapparate begin, en soos enige klein seuntjie het hy dapper probeer aanpas. Maar sy gehoor het verder verswak, en die aparate kon nie sy wêreld heeltemal oopmaak nie. Tog het Linwill nooit sy gees verloor nie. Hy het elke dag nog steeds ingestap met daardie groot hart, daardie sprankelende persoonlikheid en daardie ongelooflike sin vir humor wat hom uniek maak. Waar hy ook al gaan, laat hy iemand glimlag. Mense raak gou behep met sy warm, liefdevolle natuur, hy het 'n manier om die wêreld vir almal rondom hom sagter te maak.

Ons het die stap geneem wat sy lewe sou verander: 'n Kogleêre implanting. Dit was 'n groot besluit en 'n nog groter hoop. Die herstel was nie altyd maklik nie, maar die vordering, dié was 'n wonderwerk op sy eie

Vir die eerste keer het ek gesien hoe die lig in my kind se oë helderder word, hoe sy wêreld groter word, klank vir klank, woord vir woord. Sy spraak het begin ontvou soos 'n blom wat lank in die winter vasgehou is. En saam daarmee het sy kwaliteit van lewe begin verander op maniere waarvoor ek net kon bid.

Linwill is een van die aangenaamste seuntjies wat 'n mens kan ontmoet. Hy is liefdevol, lewenslustig en het sy eie besonderse manier om vreugde te bring waar hy gaan. As sy moeder kyk ek vandag met 'n dankbare hart na hom, na sy moed, sy uithouvermoë, sy glimlag wat nooit sou verdwyn nie, al was sy wêreld vir so lank stil.

Die kogleêre implanting het nie net sy gehoor teruggegee nie. Dit het sy lig laat straal, helderder as ooit tevore.

ANDREW PARKER (NO 1083)



My cochlear implant journey has been nothing short of extraordinary, a true turning point that has changed the rhythm of my entire life.

When I first stepped into this process, I carried a mixture of nerves, excitement, and a million questions. But very quickly, I discovered something powerful: with the right people beside you, the journey becomes not just manageable, but deeply inspiring.

I had the incredible privilege of having Prof. James Loock perform my surgery. His calm presence, exceptional skill, and the confidence he brings into the room instantly put me at ease. From the moment he explained the procedure to the moment I woke up after surgery, I knew I was in the best possible hands. There's a unique kind of comfort that comes from trusting your surgeon completely, and that trust carried me through with total peace of mind.

And then there is my audiologist, the heartbeat of my journey. From day one, she has been a guide, a motivator, and a constant source of reassurance. She has a special gift, she makes you feel seen,

heard, and understood. Her patience, warmth, and enthusiasm turned every step into progress worth celebrating. She doesn't just walk the journey with you; she lifts you through it.

Now, almost a year after receiving my implant, I can genuinely say I can't imagine life without it. The world feels brighter, richer, and more connected. Every new sound, no matter how small, has felt like a victory. A gift!

If you are reading this because you are preparing for your own cochlear implant, let me tell you this from the heart: you have SO much to look forward to. Yes, you might feel nervous. Yes, it might feel overwhelming at times. But you are on the edge of something extraordinary, a journey of rediscovery that will change your world in the most beautiful ways.

You are not alone. You have an incredible team behind you, and you have an entire community cheering you on, including me. Embrace the process. Trust the people guiding you and get ready for the moment your world opens again. I cannot wait to welcome you to our cochlear family!

SIOBHAN MASIKARA (NO 1084)



Siobhan Masikara is a bubbly ray of sunshine.

She was born 15 weeks before time, an extreme preemie, weighing 860g. The doctors said her chances of survival past 24 hours were a mere 10%. But she made it. She gained weight and kept going. Her resilience made us hopeful and we prayed for her daily. We looked forward to the day we would take her home from the NICU. That day came almost 5 months later after a series of surgeries and lots of victories.

Our little baby started showing signs that she was hard of hearing a year later when she didn't turn when loud sounds were made. She went for tests and they showed she had bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Our little angel was in a world of silence but still such a sassy little girl.

Through the help of the Tygerberg Audiology Team and the Harry Crossley Foundation, Siobhan was selected to get surgery for a bilateral cochlear implant which took place in December 2024. She was switched on in January and since then we have seen a whole new baby girl. She is more aware of her environment, is awed by different sounds, loves Ms. Rachel and muppets! She follows along as they sing and does the gestures timeously! It has been amazing to witness. She is now double-sassy!

Her laughter fills our house and our hearts can't help but swell with joy when she repeats words after us! We recognise that we have a winding journey ahead of us, but we are eager and positive because she is our Star Girl who refuses to let challenges stop her!

Thank you to the team for making this possible for our Siobhan. They gifted our baby with a world of sound, and our family with joy unending. We will forever be grateful.

HELEEN VAN EEDEN (NO 1088)

My moeder het my as 'n normale baba ervaar en selfs my babageluide se ontwikkeling was vir my moeder normaal. In die laaste maande van my eerste jaar het my babataal stil geraak. Ons was verwys vir gehoortoets en die uitslag was dat ek erge bilaterale gehoorverlies het.

Ons was direk verwys na die Carel du Toit Sentrum by die Tygerberg Hospitaal waar ek op 13 maande my eerste "body aids" gekry het en ingeskakel het by die sentrum se Ouerleidingprogram.

Vir my moes die kindewêreld 'n moeilike uitdaging gewees het want alle geluide en woorde is tot vervelens toe herhaal. Later in my lewe het dit geblyk dat ek 'n klein "fighter" was. Met die Carel du Toit Sentrum se uitstekende span terapeute en my moeder se deursettingsvermoë het ek redelike normale spraak aangeleer en beide my laerskool en hoërskool loopbane in hoofstroom skole voltooi.

As middelafstand atleet het ek myself ook uitgeleef en het die voorreg gehad om aan drie Deaf-Olympic byeenkomste deel te neem.

My loopbaan keuse was baie moeilik want ek moes die praktiese realiteit van my gehoorgebrek in 'n werksituasie en my belangstellings in ag neem. Ek het uiteindelik besluit om 'n Nasionale Diploma kursus in Biomediese Tegnologie aan die Kaapse Tegnikon te volg waarna ek in 'n mediese laboratorium sou werk.

Die klasse was groot en daar was baie gesteun op die inligting wat in die lesings gedek was. Ek het reg voor in die klas gesit en elke lesing is met 'n klein bandmasjien opgeneem. My ouers het die vakke tussen hulle verdeel en saans het hulle die dag se lesings verbatim uitgeskryf. So het ons as 'n span vir 4 jaar deurgedruk en die kursus suksesvol voltooi.

In 2024 het ek baie probleme met my gehoorstukke ondervind, ek besluit het genoeg is genoeg; aparate werk net nie meer vir my nie en het besluit om 'n kogleëre inplanting te oorweeg om my selfvertroue terug te kry.

Tydens die lang eerste onderhoud by Tygerberg KI Eenheid het ek al my vrae en bekommernisse met my oudioloog bespreek om meer sekerheid te kry. Sy het net op elke vraag nuwe deure vir my oopgemaak. Ek het ook met vriende gesels wat al die KI pad gestap het om te hoor van hulle ervarings. Hierna was ek opgewonde en baie positief oor my eie KI reis.

Met die aktivering van my KI was die klank sag gestel, maar soos dit geleidelik hoër gestel was, het meer klanke deurgekom. Ek moes weer leer luister met my "nuwe KI gehoor". Almal se stemme het anders geklink en ek moes selfs leer om aan my eie



stem gewoon te raak. Ek was vir 45 jaar totaal afhanklik van lippees. Nou moet ek leer om te luister sonder om te lippees. Dit is nogal 'n uitdaging. Maar ek vat dit dag vir dag.

Ek besef nou hoe stil my 45 jare was. Ek was van soveel vreugdeklanke afgesny. Vir die 1ste keer kan ek nou voëls in bome hoor kwetter, die fluit van die gasketel, die hond se naels op die vloer, my kollegas se vingers wat op die sleutelbord tik en die alarmklokkies van die laboratoriumtoerusting wat afgaan.

Vroeër was ek afhanklik van my kollegas om vir my te sê die alarmklokkies lui. Nou is dit ironies dat dit ek is wat hulle herinner want ek reageer eerste op die alarmklokkies. Ek het nooit kon droom dat daar so baie geluide in die wêreld is nie. Daar is nou so baie nuwe klank-ervarings en so baie wat ek wil inhaal.

Wat 'n voorreg om te kan hoor! Wat 'n voorreg om my reis na die wêreld van klank met ander te deel. Dankie aan elkeen wat hierdie reis saam met my meegemaak het. Ek beplan om binnekort ook 'n tweede implanting in my ander oor te kry.

SOFIYYAH ALLIE (NO 1093)



We are the proud parents of little Sofiyah Allie, our bright and curious 3-year-old daughter. From the moment she entered our lives, she brought light and love into our every day. But very early on, we discovered that Sofiyah had been born with a hearing loss — something we only truly began to understand during her first year.

At first, the news was overwhelming. Like many parents, we were filled with uncertainty, fear, and countless questions about what her future might hold. We started our journey with hearing aids, hoping they would give her the connection to sound that she deserved. They helped to some extent, but as time went on, we realized Sofiyah needed something more to truly experience the world around her.

That's when we made the life-changing decision for her to receive a cochlear implant at the age of two. We wanted to give her the best possible chance to hear, to experience the laughter, music, and voices that make up the beautiful sounds of life. Her father, who has a deep love for technology, found hope and meaning in knowing that modern innovation could help our daughter connect with the world in such a profound way.

The journey hasn't been without challenges, but we are incredibly grateful for the support and guidance of the amazing team at Carel du Toit Centre. Their dedication, compassion, and expertise have made a world of difference. We have watched Sofiyah transform, from a quiet and often isolated little girl into a vibrant child who is blossoming day by day. The staff at Carel du Toit don't just teach children to listen and speak; they open doors to new possibilities, and for that, we are forever thankful.

To other families who may be walking a similar path or preparing for a cochlear implant journey, our message is simple: there is always hope. Even when things seem uncertain, there is always another way forward. With Sofiyah's cochlear implant, we have witnessed a beautiful change. She is no longer withdrawn from the world but instead blooming like the little flower she was always meant to be.

Every sound she hears now feels like a small miracle, and we couldn't be prouder of how far she's come.

HENDRIK THERON (NO 1096)

Having been born with normal binaural hearing one tends to take things for granted. Thus my bicycle crash in May 2014 at the good age of 53 years, leaving me deaf in my right ear coupled with permanent vertigo as my vestibular system was also damaged, was a great wake-up call that one should not take anything for granted.

After eight months of rehabilitation and corrective eye surgery, I started using a CROS-hearing aid system. As we found that hearing loss is noticeable in my healthy ear as well, it led me to explore a cochlear implant and subsequent procedure. The switch on happened three weeks later.

Some of the big challenges with one-sided hearing loss, even with a CROS system, are noisy environments and directionality of sound. Since my implant both these issues resolved to almost 100%. I have full confidence in a noisy environment that I will be able to hear adequately and in general I can almost spot on determine from which direction a sound is coming. This directionality is of utmost importance as I continue to cycle and can determine the direction of traffic whilst on the bicycle. Even though the cochlear implant sounds remain electronic the benefit of binaural hearing far outweighs the technicalities accompanying a cochlear implant.

I would and have advised people to undergo the implant in cases where there were doubts and in my own case would instantly undergo the operation again as initially, I was very doubtful.

I am grateful I was given the opportunity and thank you all involved in the process.



GIZEL VAN NIEKERK (NO 1099)



I was diagnosed with hearing loss between the ages of 6 and 7 years.

I still remember how I would put the television sound higher than normal volume and put my hands on the speakers just to feel the vibration.

My right ear had no hearing and my left ear had a moderate loss. I received a hearing aid but at the time, couldn't understand what was happening. I completed mainstream until Grade 3 and then moved to Sonitus School for the Hard of Hearing in Pretoria where I finished matric.

It was difficult to adapt to a new environment, I felt rejected at times but confident that I will overcome any negative thoughts.

I made sure to look at a person when talking and I am very good with lipreading. I have good speech intelligibility with distortion in my high frequencies. I know a little bit of sign language but lip read most of the time.

After school I decided to go into sales, it wasn't always easy as I also had to learn how to be patient within my working environment and doing so customers are more understanding and helpful, until today I'm still in the sales world 17 years later.

I would usually get very paranoid if I could not hear anything when I had problems with my hearing aid.

When my hearing aid started giving problems and I found it difficult to hear sounds, answering work phones and even had my cellphone on speaker just to hear what was said to try and communicate back, I was referred to Tygerberg Hospital Cochlear Implant Unit. Hearing tests showed the progression of my hearing loss in my good ear. This is when and where my Cochlear implant journey started.

I am blessed with the support I have been receiving from the hospital, my partner - for walking this journey with me through the tough times when things got hard and by being so patient, understanding, gentle and speaking only positive words, it changed my whole attitude and thinking, my family, my work and all my clients.

In April 2025 my cochlear implant was activated, and I am amazed and moved by how far I have come. I hear so much more than I could before. Sound is amazing.

It is important to remember there will always be challenging days, but your mindset determines your outcome and progress.

MARTHA DE BRUIN (NO 1100)

Dit is vir my belangrik om hierdie verhaal met 'n warm en oop hart te deel, want dit het my lewe op 'n manier verander waarvoor woorde eintlik te klein voel.

Ek het my kogleëre inplanting ontvang deur 'n wonderlike oudioloog. Van die eerste dag af het sy my met soveel geduld, begrip en liefde begelei. Nadat ek vir 'n paar maande gewag het, is ek ingelig dat my operasie sou plaasvind.

Ek gaan eerlik wees: ek was bang, baie bang. Ek kon nie slaap nie en my gedagtes was vol vrae en onsekerhede. Maar toe die dag aanbreek, het alles ongelooflik kalm en mooi verloop. Die dokters en personeel het my veilig en geliefd laat voel. Ek sal hulle nooit vergeet nie.

My aktiveringsdag" is 'n dag wat ek vir altyd sal koester. Dit het gevoel soos 'n geskenk uit God se eie hand. Toe die geluid stadig na my terugkom, was dit eers vreemd, amper oorweldigend. Maar binne 'n week het my hart en my ore saam begin leer.

En toe... het ek begin hóór. Ek kon weer die klanke van die lewe beleef: 'n Helikopter en 'n vliegtuig hoog bo my, 'n vragkoot, trein en motor in beweging, die sagte drup van 'n kraan, die gezoem van 'n by, 'n hond wat blaf, elfs die sagte, amper fluisterende geluid van 'n muskiet en 'n kat.

Dit was soos om my plek terug te kry in 'n wêreld waarvan ek vir 'n rukkie afgesny gevoel het.

My familie en vriende was so bly saam met my. Ons kon weer saam sit en gesels, lag, stories deel en net teenwoordig wees in mekaar se lewens.

Ek is trots dat ek weer my selfoon kan gebruik, musiek kan luister, en eenvoudig net gehoor kan deel in die wêreld rondom my.



NATASHIA VENTER (NO 1106)



A Story of Courage and Progress.

After becoming ill as a baby, my family noticed I wasn't reacting to loud sounds the way other children did. It was later confirmed that I had developed bilateral severe sensorineural hearing loss.

From a young age, I used hearing aids and learned to navigate a world of sound with determination and grace. Despite my challenges, I developed clear speech and communicated orally with ease. I also live with a visual impairment due to bilateral retinal detachments, yet my resilience continues to shine through.

I was assessed at Tygerberg Hospital and found to be a good candidate for a cochlear implant and underwent surgery in my right ear, a life-changing moment filled with hope. The implant was successfully activated followed by several weeks of programming and rehabilitation at Tygerberg before returning home.

It has now been more than 6 months since activation and my most recent visit took place on 4 November 2025, which coincided with the 39th anniversary of the first cochlear implant at Tygerberg Hospital—a powerful moment of legacy and progress.

I am now able to hear softer sounds and manage better in noisy environments, my speech has become noticeably clearer (something many people have joyfully commented on). I continue to use a hearing aid in my left ear alongside the implant.

Each step forward reflects the strength of my spirit and the support of those walking this journey with me.

My story is a testament to what's possible when courage, technology, and community come together. It's a journey of faith, perseverance, and quiet transformation. With heartfelt thanks.

WOUTER CRONJE (NO 1108)

Hello Cochlear community!

Op 52 was dit nie 'n maklike besluit nie, maar vandag is ek nie vir een oomblik spyt nie!

My gehoorverlies het begin toe ek 'n kind was, omtrent 12 jaar oud, 'n gebrek aan hoë frekwensies wat jaar na jaar erger geword het. As ek nou terug dink, is ek regtig spyt dat ek nie die inplanting al vroeër laat doen het nie. Ek kon nie oor die foon hoor of aanlyn vergaderings bywoon nie. My werk het hieronder gely. Kommunikasie by die huis was frustrerend om nie eens te praat van as ek alleen winkels toe, of by 'n restaurant gaan sit het nie, sulke besoeke gaan gepaard met vrae wat ek meeste van die tyd nie kon hoor nie - soms baie embarrassing!

Die operasie was vinnig en pyn was tydelik en was somer vinnig oor en verby. Die eerste 3 maande na die inplanting was nie maklik nie, die klanke klink elektronies en al die nuwe klanke het nie baie sin gemaak nie. Onthou, ek het vir 40 jaar lank meeste van die normale klanke uitgemis en dit was en is steeds bietjie "overwhelming" maar ek weet my brein leer dit aan elke dag stadig maar seker.

Met elke besoek by Tygerberg is die nodige toetse en verstellings gedoen, wat elke stap van my nuwe gehoor verbeter.

Ek hoor nou honde blaf in die verte, duiwe koer op my huis se dak (ek het nooit geweet 'n Hadede voël kan so verskriklik raas nie) en nog vele meer klanke wat ek so lank mee sonder gelewe het. Telefoon oproepe en aanlyn meetings is soveel makliker.

Nou, na die inplanting, het ek meer selfvertroue, stap in 'n gesprek en gesels lekker saam, waar ek voorheen gewoonlik onttrek en weggestap het. Ek is nou eers aangeskakel vir 6 maande en het reeds so baie verbeter.

Wees geduldig, dit raak beter en beter met tyd soos jou brein dit aanleer. Sterkte!



ALEXIA SETTIE (NO 1110)



Our baby Alexia was diagnosed with meningitis in February 2025, which unfortunately led to profound hearing loss.

Learning this news was devastating. We felt immense sadness, worry, and trauma, fearing for our child's future and the impact on her development.

After numerous tests, the audiology staff recommended cochlear implants to help our child access sound. We were nervous but hopeful. The surgery was a significant step, and we were thrilled that it was successful. The cochlear implants were implanted, and after a period of healing, the day arrived to switch them on.

The moment the cochlear implants were activated was indescribable. Seeing our child's reaction to sound after a long time was pure joy. Four months later, we're amazed at the progress. Our baby has great access to sound and is starting to talk!

This journey has brought immense excitement to our family. We're grateful for the supportive medical staff at Tygerberg Hospital and CHAT who guided us through this process. We're also thankful to the generous donor (Maggy Farham) who made it possible for our child to receive bilateral cochlear implants.

This gift has opened up a new world of possibilities for our child. We're looking forward to seeing her grow and thrive.



CHARLOTTE KIRKMAN (NO 1113)



I had a Cochlear Implant operation at the age of 82 and it has revolutionised my life. I only wish that I had had it done a few years ago.

Age is no barrier and I opted to go for the latest implant; I felt that I owed it to myself!

I started to go deaf in my left ear when I was 62 and had a hearing aid fitted. It certainly helped, but then I began to go deaf in my right ear too. I wore good hearing aids and they certainly helped, but I felt increasingly isolated. I am very gregarious and it was really hard to go to or host dinner parties and not to know what people were discussing, to be unable to go to lectures or the cinema, to just battle generally if there were more than two people present.

I actually visited the Tygerberg Hospital CI offices in 2012, but the criteria then were more strict than today and I was told that I did not qualify for a CI. (However, apparently if I had gone today with that level of deafness I would have been considered which is interesting and encouraging).

I found that in general the public is not aware of how to cope with someone who is hard of hearing; tellers in supermarkets, shops in general, just don't attempt to speak slowly or clearly when told that a person is deaf, they just speak louder which of course is not the answer. I noticed that certain of my friends were much clearer to hear, women in particular, but that many took no real cognisance of my problem, would carry on talking when I was in another room or had my back to them, they just did not realise what it was like for the affected person.

What I found extraordinary was that I was often asked if I wore hearing aids? Well, hello? I would react impatiently; if one is not seeing well one wears spectacles and no one queries that. Yet they ask these stupid questions about loss of hearing! All this resulted in increasing isolation and I was losing out on friendships and family gatherings in general.

I visited Tygerberg Hospital CI Department again in the past year and re-connected with the wonderful audiologist. I passed all the criteria and had the operation in Somerset West. The fitting of the processor was dramatic and from the outset I could hear which apparently is unusual. I did the various reading and repeating exercises with my friends at home and could hear sight unseen immediately so it would seem that I am a bit of a freak! It is amazing the difference that it has made in every way; I can watch Dstv with the aid of the excellent Nucleus App, can go to lectures and the cinema, enjoy going to restaurants and the odd party and being able to contribute.

I delight in showing people my appliance and telling them about it as generally the public knows very little about cochlear implants. My audiologist lent me the book "A Sound from Silence" by Graeme Clark, the Australian inventor of the cochlear implant, which was fascinating and described how he persevered to create an appliance that has helped tens of thousands of deaf people world-wide.

What I have found so uplifting is the total dedication of the team at Tygerberg and elsewhere to improve the quality of life of those afflicted with deafness and to give them their lives back. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I have kept a journal of my whole CI experience and send it to people who want to know more about the whole experience. Go for it, I tell them, it will revolutionise your life!

PATRICK SMITH (NO 1115)



'n Tweede Kans om te Hoor.

Ek sou nooit kon droom dat my lewe op 72 so drasties sou verander nie. Ek het 'n skielike, ondraaglike pyn van my kop tot in my rug ervaar. Ek het dokter toe gegaan, maar toe my toestand nie verbeter nie, is ek in die hospitaal opgeneem.

Die volgende paar dae onthou ek niks — en toe ek weer by bewustheid kom, het die dokter my vertel dat ek 'n ligte beroerte en meningitis gehad het. My gehoor was weg. Daardie oomblik het my wêreld stil geword.

Maar tussen die stilte het daar hoop gekom. Die dokter het gesê dat daar 'n kans is dat ek weer kan hoor — deur 'n kogleêre inplanting. Ek het trane van verligting gehuil. Ek is toe aan my oudioloog en ONK sjirurg voorgestel, twee wonderlike mense wat met deernis en professionaliteit verduidelik het hoe die proses werk. Hulle het alles in hul vermoë gedoen om die mediese goedkeuring en fondse betyds gereël te kry.

Ek het my operasie ondergaan, en dit was die begin van 'n nuwe lewe. Daarna het ek by Tygerberg Hospitaal voortgegaan waar my oudioloog my week na week met soveel geduld gehelp het om weer te leer hoor. Elke nuwe klank, 'n stem, die wind, voëls, het soos 'n wonder gevoel.

Vandag is ek ongelooflik dankbaar. Ek kan weer hoor, gesels en my daaglikse take verrig. Ek beveel die kogleêre inplanting van harte aan, aan engeen wat twyfel, dit verander lewens.

Dankie aan my Hemelse Vader, aan Constantia Mediese Kliniek, Tygerberg Hospitaal, en elke personeelid wat aan my sy gestaan het. Julle het my weer hoop gegee, en ek sal vir altyd dankbaar wees.



SIENNA ARAKAZA (NO 1117)



I would like to share our journey of hope, perseverance and gratitude.

When Sienna was about nine months old, I began to notice that she did not respond to sounds. Concerned, I took her to local clinic for an assessment. The healthcare worker asked if she reacted when I called her name or if she had started saying simple words like "dada" I had to answer "no".

We were then referred to Red Cross Hospital, where further tests confirmed that Sienna had a hearing loss. From there, we were connected to Tygerberg Hospital and the Carel du Toit Centre for specialized support and guidance.

Initially, Sienna was fitted with hearing aids, but they did not provide much improvement. Later, the Healthcare team informed me that she was a candidate for a cochlear implant, a device that could help her hear and develop speech. This news filled me with so much

hope and relief. I had been worried about how my daughter would communicate, and the opportunity for her being able to hear and speak brought great comfort to my heart.

Today, it has been three months since Sienna received her cochlear implant, and her progress has been truly remarkable. She now responds when I call her name and she started saying some words. Seeing her reach these milestones fills me with overwhelming joy and gratitude.

I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the entire team at Carel du Toit and Tygerberg Hospital. Your dedication, compassion, and support have changed my daughter's life. Despite the financial challenges I faced, you made it possible for Sienna to have this life-changing opportunity.

FEZIWE NJONGA (NO 1123)

I would like to share my personal journey with my cochlear implant and the profound impact it has had on my life.

Before I received my cochlear implant, I was not able to hear at all. My ears just went deaf out of nowhere since 2011. It affected me so much because I struggled to hear people correctly. I would look at them in their eyes in order to see their lips.

In 2025 I decided to do a cochlear implant. As someone who has experienced the life changing benefits of a cochlear implant firsthand, I wanted to share my story. A cochlear implant really helped me. I can hear properly without looking at anyone, though at first it was painful for 2 days, but besides that I am now the happiest woman alive.



VUYOKAZI NTULEKA (NO 1125)



In 2011 I was very sick, and I lost my hearing. It was so difficult to communicate with people. I was dependent on texting.

Years went by and I used a hearing aid. It was promising because I was able to hear some noise. I think my ear was too damaged because I couldn't hear though I was using it.

In 2024 I was referred by an Audiologist to Tygerberg Hospital for cochlear implant assessment, everything went well and I did some tests and scans.

I remember the first day when we switched on the cochlear implant, it felt so good to be able to hear again the sounds that I've missed since 2011.

Thank you to the doctors and everyone who walked with me through this journey, mostly I thank God, who made it possible. I really appreciate you.

PENELOPE GILL (NO 1126)



My hearing loss began abruptly forty-four years ago when I was assaulted by a stranger and received a severe blow to the right side of my head. My cochlea was damaged, and I struggled to hear thereafter.

I was a busy nursing lecturer and the mother of two small children. As the years went by, I obtained two hearing aids as both ears were affected. Despite the regular updating of the technology my hearing remained poor.

In 2024 I fell in hospital after a hip replacement and landed in the ICU with a fractured skull resulting in almost complete loss of hearing in the right ear. After trying out new hearing aids with little success, my ENT surgeon suggested a cochlear implant.

I was implanted on the right side and paired with a compatible hearing instrument. My journey over the last four months has been miraculous. From silence to just a noise in the implanted ear to tinny voices and then to near normal voices. It has been an amazing journey of faith in my brain to learning a new way of hearing and faith and gratefulness to my wonderful ENT surgeon and audiologist.

My main goal was to be able to hear and understand my beautiful grandchildren speaking. Every week it just gets better and better. Advice to those thinking about an implant...I have no regrets I am just so grateful for the opportunity to hear again. Thank you.

JENNEFER MALGAS (NO 1128)

Ek is 'n 61 jarige dame wat bilaterale gehoor verlies ondervind het sedert 2019. Omdat ek werkzaam was met die publiek was kommunikasie baie moeilik, byvoorbeeld telefoon oproepe, dokters bevele uitvoer en met pasiënte te werk.

Ek het gehoorapparate gebruik in beide ore maar my gehoor in die linkeroor het drasties verswak en so was ek verwys na die kogleëre inplantings eenheid by Tygerberg. Na verskeie prosesse en ondersoeke is ek geopereer en my proseseerder aangskakel en my kommunikasie het drasties verbeter. Ek sal 'n KI aanbeveel indien iemand n suksesvolle kandidaat is. Graag bedank ek die kogleëre span van Tygerberg vir hul puik diens.



TEENAGE COCHLEAR IMPLANT EVENT 2025



The TH-SU CIP Teenage Day 2025 was hosted at Stellenbosch University's new Biomedical Research Institute on 16 July 2025.

A group of teens and young adult mentors, all cochlear implant recipients, gathered for a day of fun, building relationships, learning and growing together! They shared experiences and learned about self-advocacy in challenging situations, what life after school is like and where to find the best support.

A big shout out and thank you to **Southern ENT** that sponsored the lunch and treats for the teenager day!



We invite all teenagers from our Cochlear Implant Unit to join our Teenager Group!

Simply scan the QR code to join the WhatsApp group and stay updated on our next exciting event.


**Teenage Cochlear
Implant Group**
WhatsApp group



THE TYGERBERG HOSPITAL/ CAREL DU TOIT TRUST NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING PROGRAM



Around 6000 babies are born with hearing loss in South Africa every year; however, fewer than 10% receive a hearing screening at birth. Because hearing loss is an “invisible” condition, it can go unnoticed in the early months of life. Many children are only diagnosed years later, missing the critical

window for learning, listening and language development. Newborn hearing screening is essential for early detection and intervention, so that every hearing-impaired child can be given the opportunity to develop to his/her full potential.

In partnership with the Carel du Toit Trust, the Tygerberg Hospital Audiology Department has been running a newborn hearing screening program for high risk babies since 2016. Over 30 000 infants born with prematurity and other birth complications have received a hearing screening test before going home from the hospital. During 2025, the program expanded with the goal of screening well babies born at Tygerberg hospital, in an effort to promote universal newborn hearing screening.

Babies who do not pass their first hearing screening are re-screened and then referred for further diagnostic testing if necessary. If a hearing loss is identified, swift action is taken to make sure that the baby receives appropriate intervention and that the family is supported in this journey.



A newborn hearing screening test need not be done by an audiologist or a health professional. A suitably trained lay- person working under the supervision of an audiologist may conduct the test. Newborn hearing screening at Tygerberg hospital is conducted by 3 screeners, some parents of children with hearing loss.

POWER OF SPEECH

The Power of Speech event was held again this year at the Western Cape Provincial Parliament.

We were proud to share the platform with children who were fortunate enough to receive newborn hearing screening. The purpose: to show the amazing abilities of children who are deaf and have learned to listen and speak.



This event, which follows last year’s first-ever on the African continent, is intended to make government and policymakers aware that if newborn hearing screening was compulsory in South Africa, children born deaf or with hearing loss could have the same opportunities as children with normal hearing. Early knowledge and early support make all the difference, but it is the minority who receive it!

Our message to government focused on three key actions:



- **Engage:** We need ongoing, meaningful discussions with policy-makers so that early hearing screening and support become mandatory.
- **Unite:** Everyone involved in early hearing care needs to work together, using the same guidelines across the province and country, so that every child gets the best possible service.
- **Implement:** Newborn hearing screening must be actually be carried out—consistently, sustainably, and using proven methods—so that babies with hearing loss are identified and appropriately supported as early as possible.



CONGRATULATIONS:

HANNAH ROOPEN (NO 420)



My name is Hannah Roopen, and my journey to improving my academic results has been one of deep struggle, courage, and unwavering determination. Living with a hearing impairment meant that every day at school came with silent battles, straining to hear my teachers, missing parts of lessons, feeling left behind in group discussions, and often feeling isolated in a world that

moved too quickly for me to fully grasp. There were moments when the frustration felt overwhelming and I questioned whether I would ever be able to keep up, let alone excel.

But within those moments of doubt, I found strength. I refused to allow my limitations to define my future. I spent long hours revising my work, teaching myself what I could not clearly hear, and pushing through exhaustion when others had already given up. Every small improvement felt like a victory, and every challenge became a reminder of how hard I was willing to fight for my dreams.

By the end of Grade 11, achieving academic excellence was more than just a result — it was proof of my resilience, my faith in myself, and my determination to rise above the obstacles placed in my path. This success represents not only my hard work but also my courage to stand tall despite the silence, and to show that even in adversity, greatness is possible.

SHYLLENE ROSS (NO 715)



It has been almost 10 years since I have been diagnosed with severe hearing loss. And today, I am so grateful to have the second chance at hearing again. A lot has happened since being implanted since 2018 and 2022 respectively – from finishing matric in 2nd position as well as finishing my undergrad degree at the University of Cape Town in 2025. And it is all thanks to the amazing cochlear implants I have.

I was so unsure whether I would thrive in a setting like a university- with its student-packed lecture halls, loud noise all over and competitive environment. Well, turns out I survived it quite well. Through my disability, I was able to lean into my internal strengths, motivating myself that hearing disability is not the end- it is the beginning. There have been many instances where I have educated people on the cochlear implant and the wonders it does for people like you and me.

Now, as I have finished my first undergraduate degree in 2025, I am letting education take me further. I am furthering my studies in Honours in Industrial Psychology/Organisational Psychology at UCT for 2026 and it would not have been such a fruitful experience if it wasn't for my beneficial cochlear implants.

My motto for the next year: "There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning." – Jiddu Krishnamurti

And this education is made possible through my implants.

THEN AND NOW



Neave Barrett, Zara Ledger and Faye Allwood were all implanted around the same time as babies.



Neave and Zara recently met up again, 10 years later.

FUNDRAISING PROJECT THAT INSPIRED US IN 2025: HEAR US HARMONY CONCERT

On 6 September 2025 the 3rd Hear Us Harmony Concert took place at the Endler Hall, Stellenbosch University. The goal of the concert was to raise funds for and create awareness of cochlear implantation through a celebration of sound.



It was a spectacular event of wonderful music and singing with performances by The Heydeburg Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dr Leonard Heydenrych and The Stellenbosch Youth Orchestra conducted by Reghardt Kühn. Various celebrated soloists, including Alida Scheepers, Dumisa Masoka, Jose Dias (piano), Mario Nell (organ) and Dr Chris van Straten (clarinet) were included in the programme featuring exceptional works from the classical repertoire.



Special features by Bianca Naude, Lister Maramba, Kate Allwood and Christopher Silence - all cochlear implant recipients were included in the wonderful program.

More than R400 000 was raised, and we would like to thank the organizers and many sponsors of this event.



MESSAGE FROM OUR TEAM TO THE COCHLEAR IMPLANT FAMILY



We gratefully thank all donors, sponsors (including medical aids), referring agents and other role players that contributed and made cochlear implantation possible for many recipients this year. To each implantee, what an honour and fulfilling experience to work alongside you and your families. May the wonder of sound continue to resonate in our souls and may many more deserving recipients receive the gift of hearing.

THE TBH-SU CIP TEAM MEMBERS



A special mention goes to the Tygerberg Hospital Administration and WC Department of Health for your continued support over the years to make this life-changing technology available to patients in the state sector.

TO CONTACT OUR TEAM

FOR NEW REFERRALS:

Contact our Programme Coordinator Jenny Perold at jennifer.perold@westerncape.gov.za

**WHATSAPP / SMS NUMBER:
082 283 1966**

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

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

Our team is extremely grateful for the donations received from the Hear Always Foundation Trust (HAFT), Harry Crossley Foundation, HearUs and Netcare Foundation Trust. Without these donations many needy patients would not have been able to be assisted with the "gift of hearing".



HAFT, established in 2013, has been supporting cochlear implant recipients and our programme to enable access to life-changing technology and intervention services.

The **Harry Crossley Foundation** supports the essential service of our Auditory-Verbal Therapist who is based at CHAT / Carel du Toit Centre. More than 179 patients have received donations from the Harry Crossley Foundation since 2008. These are some of the patients that received contributions in 2025



A SOUTH AFRICAN COCHLEAR IMPLANT ASSOCIATION

HearUs is a registered and regulated non-profit organisation established in 2001 and operates in close association with the Tygerberg Hospital – Stellenbosch University Cochlear Implant Programme. We are committed to support individuals to afford and maintain their cochlear implant systems. During 2025 more than 40 families were supported by HearUs.

HearUs is grateful for any donations which are used to assist needy patients with the costs of their cochlear implant system, maintenance and other related needs. 18A tax certificates are available on request.

Donations to HearUs can be made to:

Account holder:	HearUs
Bank:	ABSA
Branch:	Durbanville
Branch code:	632005
Account number:	4053388469
Swift code:	ABSA ZA JJ

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



WOOLWORTHS MYDIFFERENCE PROGRAMME



The Woolworths MySchool card is being phased out and is replaced with the MyDifference programme on the Woolies rewards app. The card will no longer be accepted after 30 June 2025.

HearUs requests that anyone who would like to support their efforts to help individuals with severe hearing

loss in the Western Cape to afford cochlear implantation, ongoing maintenance, and other diagnostic, educational, or rehabilitative needs, download the Woolies app on their phone and select HearUs as one of their causes.

Instructions are as follows:

1. Download the Woolworths App on your phone
2. New customers should register and existing Woolies customers sign up
3. Join MyDifference – step by step process
4. On the Loyalty hub page, tap on 'Causes', select 'Choose my own'
5. Type HearUS in 'Find a Cause'
6. Click on the HearUS profile and 'ADD CAUSE' (can add a total of 3 causes)
7. Track your support – on the loyalty hub page, you can see what causes you support and the total contributions to those organisations through the MyDifference programme.

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 Nola Parsons at info@hearus.org.za

Contact HearUs on: info@hearus.org.za

Please visit our website: www.hearus.org.za

Follow HearUs on social media:

 [@HearUsZa](https://www.instagram.com/HearUsZa)

 [@Hearus_cochlearimplants_za](https://www.facebook.com/Hearus_cochlearimplants_za)



IN MEMORIAM

It was with great sadness that we
learnt of the passing of the following
implantees during 2025:



Peter Markey (No 337)

Born: 17 April 1933

Received his CI:

25 August 2008

† 2023



Della Mymin (No 20)

Born: 10 June 1938

Received her CI:

12 December 1989

† 8 March 2025



Kevin Roos (No 375)

Born: 20 July 2010

Received his CI:

12 April 2010

† 7 July 2024



Lesley Gadd (No 920)

Born: 6 March 1967

Received her CI:

11 April 2022

† May 2025



Vanessa Skors (No 780)

Born: 5 August 1969

Received her CI:

6 March 2019

† February 2025



Aloshey Arendse (No 674)

Born: 6 June 2009

Received her CI:

26 May 2017

† 17 June 2025

Tygerberg Hospital Stellenbosch University Cochlear Implant Programme

NEWSLETTER • NUUSBRIEF

DECEMBER 2025 DESEMBER