

Your questions – Looking Back

Stan I was originally offered a cochlear implant some seven years ago, but - and here I think the internet is the dangerous place sometimes - because I looked up information about cochlear implants and it frightened me sick as to what I found out, or what I thought I was finding out. Things like that it looked like the operation was a really major one that lasted 5 hours, and you would end up with a great big scar right around your head, so to speak, and they were drilling bits out here, there and everywhere. I mean this is why I didn't do it so long ago, but in talking to Mr Mitchell, the surgeon recently and asking, "Well, how long's the operation and what does it entail?", I was so surprised that the operation was about 2 hours and the scar was only about that long [about 5 cm] right behind your ear.

If there is anyone thinking of going for a cochlear implant, my advice would be go and do it, don't delay. There is nothing to do about it and you will be amazed at how your quality of life will change.

Tayseer I would advise people who are thinking of going for a cochlear implant to be optimistic and patient. It is not an easy journey; you have to be very patient at the beginning, especially when you have the switch on. It is a journey, a process, and it is different from one person to the other, but it takes some time for your brain to become adapted and get used to it, but eventually you will enjoy it and you will get the maximum benefit out of it.

Juliet I know several people who I believe would greatly benefit from a cochlear implant as I have done. And I would say to them, go for it. Don't be afraid of the operation: it is easy to recover from, it is not a big deal and the pleasure of being able to hear again in a more normal way is just immeasurable - it will change your life.

Toni I would have love to have had this cochlear implant 10 years ago. I know they say it is never too late, but I would have liked it earlier, but maybe it was not to be. I had other things going on at that time, and maybe my hearing... I think the hearing has to be a certain low level to have this implant.

Anybody contemplating a cochlear implant must be aware that it is a great commitment, but if you have got good help with you, not a problem - but you must be prepared to commit yourself to this and come back for several appointments but otherwise, fantastic.

Katherine If you are unsure, talk to somebody. There are loads of online communities; the experts here at the centre are brilliant to talk to - but do talk. If you are not ready, then pause, reflect, take five or whatever you need, because the experts would not put you on that journey unless you are right and you could do it.

Ian My situation was perhaps not the run of the mill here at the AIS. I didn't meet the NICE guidelines to have an implant under the NHS, so to follow the self-funded pathway and pay potentially £35,000 for the whole process covering all the costs up to the first year, was quite a decision. It was a family decision, and in the end, yes, we went ahead and I benefitted greatly.

Juliet Now that I have been able to hear again I have been able to join in with all sorts of in all previously inaccessible activities, and those activities include joining a book club which is a great pleasure. I am able to be fully involved at work again, and in a way that I was unable to do when I completely lost all hearing. I have undertaken some voluntary work now, which is great fun, and I think the biggest pleasure of all is just to be able to join in the fun and laughter and conversation with family and friends around the dinner table.

Britt-Marie Marvellous as it is, I can't say that, you know, I'm suddenly a hearing person. I did ask somebody in the implant centre, "What do I call myself, hearing or deaf?", and she very sweetly said, "I am afraid you will always be deaf but you will hear that much more than you used to".

I find being in a crowd very, very difficult, any background noise, like background music, makes it almost impossible to hear - but to talk to a person face to face in a relatively quiet surrounding it is absolutely brilliant.

Juliet I think the only real difficulty that I still have with my hearing is when I am in a big group with a lot of people, and lots of people are talking at the same time. It is very difficult to focus on a voice at the same time and that is something that is a drawback of using either a hearing aid or a cochlear implant, I think.

Gillian I find it difficult to hear in a crowded room. The background noise takes over sound, and I don't manage, so I tend to avoid crowded places. Other than that, I think I manage very well.

If someone asked me whether or not to go ahead I would say, "It's a commitment, and if you are prepared to do it, I wouldn't hesitate to have it done".

Janet I would recommend the cochlear implant to anybody that was finding conversation, speech, any sort of hearing - if they have problems with it. I was a complete coward when I was first offered implant referral and I left it for about ten years, but I honestly wish that I had known a bit more about it earlier. Having said that, I am really chuffed with it and I would recommend it.

Tayseer I would definitely recommend a cochlear implant for other people and to just go for it, it is truly life changing and if they have the opportunity to do another implant I would definitely do it.

Brian If was fortunate enough to be offered a second implant, I would be grabbing it with both hands. I'd be over the moon. Yes please!

Christine But it's just been like a miracle and once again, as I said earlier, I would recommend anyone contemplating having an implant to go for it because it has been the best thing I have ever done and I don't regret it for one minute. It has been like a miracle.