

Are Cochlear Implants the Right Answer?

By Abby Galletti

Many parents of deaf/hard of hearing children are faced with the difficult choice to have their children receive a cochlear implant or not. Part of the reason that parents have a difficult time making this decision for their child is that they do not know all of the information about what it means to have a cochlear implant.

A cochlear implant is a device that has been used in order to produce and amplify hearing sensations to those who are deaf and/or are severely hard of hearing. One part of the implant is surgically placed inside of the skull that receives signals from the external part of the implant which serves as a sound transmitter. The external part of the implant sits on the outside of the head and is magnetically connected to the inner part of the implant. The two parts of the implant work together in order to simulate natural hearing, however, it is different from actual hearing (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2018). It is important to emphasize the fact that a cochlear implant does not necessarily “fix” hearing loss. Since this is not a cure for deafness, many people consider the implant unnecessary and not worth going through a surgical procedure.

Another reason as to why people may be against this procedure is because it goes against Deaf culture and Deaf pride. Those who are involved in the Deaf community are very proud to be deaf and do not see themselves as disabled. In fact, they see their deafness as a culture that should be valued and that others should be proud to be a part of. Therefore, those who are part of the Deaf community may not favor the idea of the cochlear implant because it is an attempt to essentially cure deafness.

Others believe that deaf/hard of hearing children should receive the cochlear implant if it is accessible. Those who support having this procedure done believe that artificial hearing is better than not hearing at all. They also argue that having the implant allows for children and adults to be safer because they are able to hear things such as noise alarms and approaching vehicles. Hence, they believe that the surgical procedure of receiving a cochlear implant is worth getting.

Even with this information, parents still struggle to know whether or not to have their child receive a cochlear implant. However, I do not think that parents should be afraid of having their child receive the cochlear implant. The fact is that as time goes by our technology is getting better and better which means that the cochlear implant itself should improve. For example, one of the advancements for the cochlear implant is one that was made for iPhone users. Technology for our world is not only becoming deaf-friendly but cochlear user friendly. Therefore, if maintaining a sense of Deaf culture is not a major priority, parents should highly consider looking into the cochlear implant.