



Habilitation Outreach for
Professionals in Education

HOPE Note

The Newly Implanted Teenager



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Improvements in implant hardware have resulted in ear level devices that are cosmetically more appealing to adolescents than they were ten years ago. Thus, more and more teens are considering implantation; there are a number of distinctly different teenage groups who seek implantation. The following HOPE Note will identify those groups and make recommendations for intervention that is both age appropriate and commensurate with presenting skill levels.

Adolescents with Decrements in Hearing Level

For teenagers who have had prelinguistic mild to moderate hearing loss, the onset of puberty sometimes triggers a precipitous drop in hearing levels. Teens who have successfully learned spoken language through their hearing aids are often frustrated and may be despondent after the sudden change in hearing status. These adolescents often make excellent use of a cochlear implant because of their prior experience in listening and language. However, a period of adjustment to sound that is electrical (through the cochlear implant) versus mechanical (through hearing aids) is required. Implant candidates who present with this profile will need support and encouragement to persevere with the new signal. Communicating with other teens who have successfully negotiated the transition from hearing aids to implants is important. Systematic successes

with listening through the implant will serve as motivation for continuing a commitment to its use. Speech and hearing professionals will want to ensure that any auditory activity that is undertaken is of high interest to the teen: music, humor, sports and television may all be considered appropriate materials for listening practice.

Adolescents with Severe Hearing Loss and Prior Listening Experience

Changing audiologic criteria for implantation has created interest in the device for some adolescents previously ineligible for the implant to reconsider candidacy in the teenage years. These students were successful hearing aid users, but often performed less well in functional listening environments, than under ideal testing conditions. Implantation for this group often results in improved high frequency hearing, which contributes to better functional speech perception in everyday listening situations. The presenting language ability of the student will influence the type of materials that are appropriate for practicing listening skills with the implant. Providing auditory opportunities that particularly emphasize the advantage of high frequency hearing may yield good outcomes early in the process. A more analytic approach to skill development may benefit these youngsters; the degree of their language



sophistication will influence just what form these listening activities may take. A procedure called “Continuous Discourse Tracking” may offer some appeal for these teens (see DeFillipo and Scott reference) as might online listening programs that target minimal pair listening contrasts.

Adolescents with Limited Auditory and Linguistic Experience

Parents of adolescent children with limited auditory experience or linguistic development continue to choose implantation in an effort to provide greater opportunities for the future. When teenagers come to the implant process with only narrow experiences to contribute to their use of the device, more basic auditory skills will need to be targeted. Intervention with these teenagers must be relevant and immediately gratifying in order to motivate them to persevere. Practical auditory tasks such as differentiating between the length of two common, spoken messages may set the stage for the functional use of listening in the real world. Small successes should be recognized and reinforced. Because better speech is usually a desire of many in this teenage group, intensive and systematic work on a reasonable number of key words and phrases may be in order. Practicing those targets in real world communication settings may yield sufficient outcomes to encourage the continued development of new listening skills and the speech skills, albeit limited, which may arise from auditory access.

Related Resources

American English Pronunciation Practice: www.manythings.org.

Cochlear Americas. (2004). *Hear We Go! A Rehabilitation Resource for Teenagers* (CD format). Englewood, CO. To order, visit the HOPE Education and Rehab section of the Cochlear Online Store: www.cochlear.com/shop.

Cochlear Ltd. (2004). *Sound and Beyond*. (CD format). Australia. To order, visit the HOPE Education and Rehab section of the Cochlear Online Store: www.cochlear.com/shop.

Duncan, J. (2005). Making Sense of Complex Skills Lesson Planning. *The Listener: Journal of the Learning to Listen Foundation*. pp 99-107.

DeFillipo, C., & Scott, B. (1978). A method for training and evaluating the reception of ongoing speech. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*. 63, 1186-1192.

Nevins, M.E., & Garber, A.S. (2006). *Teens: A Whole 'Nother World*. HOPE Online Library. Available at www.cochlear.com/HOPE.

Tye-Murray, N. (1997). *Communication Training for Older Teenagers and Adults: Listening, Speechreading and Using Conversational Strategies*. Washington, DC: AG Bell Publications.

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