



Cochlear Implant Center  
**Westchester  
 Medical Center**

Westchester Medical Center Health Network

# CochlearConnections

News from the Cochlear Implant Center | Winter 2024

## Cochlear Implant Center

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The Cochlear Implant Center at Westchester Medical Center, flagship of the Westchester Medical Center Health Network (WMCHHealth), provides coordinated audiology and speech-therapy services for cochlear implant patients and those considering this life-changing technology. It is the only center between New York City and Albany providing comprehensive services for children and adult patients.

The Cochlear Implant Center is staffed by a team of highly trained audiologists and speech pathologists with expertise in evaluation and rehabilitation services for individuals who are cochlear implant candidates and those who receive a cochlear implant. Cochlear implantation is a highly successful technology that allows deaf children to hear and speak, and enables deafened adults to enhance their lives. The Cochlear Implant Center provides comprehensive services such as individualized programming of the implant and speech-therapy services.



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## For the Love of the Game

Sports have become an enormous part of American culture as they unite people, teach values, promote fitness and inspire hope and pride. Within American sports, safety has become an integral topic of discussion. For sports organizations to be successful, teams must perform to the best of their abilities and players must remain healthy and unharmed. The sporting industry has shown dedication in providing safer conditions through innovative thinking for the millions of children and adults who play sports in America. With this heightened awareness, it is no surprise that patients often question whether hearing loss can pose an added barrier to safety and overall success.

There is always an associated risk when playing sports, and although one should always follow a physician's recommendations for safety, in most cases, hearing loss does not preclude a person from playing most sports. With careful consideration, even those with implantable hearing devices can enjoy all the glory that sports have to offer.

### Consideration 1: Are helmets recommended?

- Safety equipment is vital in preventing minor and serious injuries in sports. Helmets have been mandatory for associations like the National Football League, National Hockey League and Major League Baseball since the mid-to-late 1900s. Organizations such as the United States Equestrian Federation have only recently mandated helmet usage, while many other organizations have yet to adopt such mandates. Recreational, community and school-based sporting organizations each have their own required equipment mandates. For those who have implantable hearing devices, such as a cochlear implant, the use of headgear and/or helmets is recommended even if it's not required by the organization. Although implants are designed using tough titanium construction, protective headwear can help lessen trauma in the event of a casualty.
- Due to the type of force and frequency of impacts, helmet features differ for every sport. It is recommended that those who utilize hearing devices use online fit guides as well as trial and error to determine the most appropriate and comfortable fit. Modifying or altering headgear or helmets in any way is never recommended as this can change the product's protective properties and leave the user more vulnerable to injury.



(continued on page 3)

## Why do I need to come in for a programming appointment?

I have another appointment at the Cochlear Implant Center. Is this really necessary?

The answer is YES! To make sure that you are getting the most out of your cochlear implant, we need to program, fine-tune and assess.

- › The initial activation usually occurs about 2-4 weeks after surgery. At this session, the audiologist will check to make sure the implant is working and stimulating the auditory nerve. The initial programming provides the first sound through the implant. **YOU ARE NOT EXPECTED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU HEAR AT THIS APPOINTMENT.**
- › Each of the following appointments is set to help fine-tune the stimulation and sound you receive, as well as to assess your benefit.
- › The audiologist will program the sound by using behavioral measures such as raising your hand, counting beeps or using loudness scales.
- › The audiologist will also try some objective programming measures. All you have to do is sit quietly and still while a small plug is placed in your ear and presents some beeps to your implant. Throughout these sessions, the audiologist will also perform various assessments with your implant. These may include listening for sounds, words or sentences. The tests help us understand how your implant is performing. You can also tell us if there are sounds or listening scenarios that you're still struggling with.
- › You will also be asked to fill out several questionnaires. These help us understand the areas that you feel are most challenging, even if they don't come up during formal testing.
- › Within the first year after surgery, you can expect to see the audiologist about 6-8 times. After the first year, you will typically come back every 6-12 months for follow-up visits. Children usually require more frequent visits.

Making sure that you get the most possible benefit from your cochlear implant takes time and a combined effort. We work as a team so that you can hear your best!



Patient Perspective:

## Stella Richardson

### How did your family find the WMCHHealth Cochlear Implant Center?

After Stella was born at our local hospital, there were a few concerns that the doctor there felt would be better assessed at the Newborn and Infant Critical Care Unit (NICCU) at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital. Stella was transferred there the next morning and received her newborn hearing test. She failed the test, and we were referred to the WMCHHealth Cochlear Implant Center for further testing.

### What surprised you most about the cochlear implant experience?

Honestly, everything has been so much easier than we thought it would be. We were very concerned at the beginning of Stella's journey, not having any experience with hearing loss at all. We were worried about her having surgery so young and concerned whether surgery would even work for her. Three years later, and it's just a part of everyday life for us all now. Stella wears her processors all day, tells us when she needs a new battery and hears everything around her. It's truly amazing!

### What would you share with a parent who has a child that is preparing for a cochlear implant?

It's definitely scary to make the decision for your child to have surgery, not really knowing what the outcome will be, but I can say from our experience, the cochlear implant truly is life-changing and an incredible technology. It was the best decision we could have ever made for Stella.

### What is Stella's favorite thing to listen to?

Stella is just like any other 4-year-old and enjoys silly sounds quite a bit! She loves holiday songs and nursery rhymes. Her absolute favorite music to listen to is by Taylor Swift. As soon as we get in the car every day, she specifically asks for "Cruel Summer," then "Gorgeous," followed by "All Too Well" (the ten-minute version...and she knows the difference, ha ha).



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## Staff Spotlight: Candace Latimore Narh

### Q: What do you like about being at the front desk of the Cochlear Implant Center?

My patients and my providers, with the emphasis on MY!

As the welcoming face at the Cochlear Implant Center, I take great pleasure in being the first smile they see when they walk through the door. I understand that not every day is easy for everyone, especially for those who have traveled from far away to receive care at our center. However, if I can be that little ray of sunshine or sense of family, I am happy to do so.

Moreover, I find fulfillment in offering reassurance and calm to our providers. I take pride in being readily available to assure them that they will overcome their challenges, and in fostering an atmosphere of confidence and support. My patients and providers are like an extended family away from home.

### Q: Tell us something about you that would surprise us:

My favorite color is pink! LOL!

Some would be surprised that I have a degree in mortuary science and my goal is to become a certified funeral director. People often wonder why I'm drawn to this profession, but to me, it encompasses everything I'm passionate about – from cosmetology and event planning to shopping and showing compassion and empathy for others.

### Q: When you are not at the office, what do you enjoy doing?

When I'm not at the office, I have a few things that I enjoy doing. Topping the list is spending quality time with my bubbly 4-year-old daughter, Janorah. She's the joy of my heart and keeps me on my toes! I also absolutely love shopping, particularly for home decor and unique fashion finds. It's safe to say that I have a real passion for it! I also enjoy doing hair and makeup.

### Q: In one word, describe a day in the Cochlear Implant Center.

When it comes to describing a day at the Cochlear Implant Center, there's simply no better word to use than "educational"!

### Q: Finish these sentences:

I have added (blank) to the office.

A zen attitude and a touch of personal flair.

A talent that I have is...

I am very creative, crafty and I enjoy doing DIY home improvement projects.

Everyone says...

I bring joy to those around me and I have a great sense of humor.

(For the Love of the Game, continued)

### Consideration 2: Should external devices be worn during sporting activities?

➤ Communication between players and coaches is not only essential for playing well but also for remaining safe. In 1894, Gallaudet University invented the football huddle to protect plays that were being communicated through American Sign Language. Just this past October, AT&T and Gallaudet University unveiled the first-ever 5G-connected football helmet, which uses cell phone technology to alert deaf and hard of hearing players of play changes and penalties. Being able to communicate effectively keeps athletes safe and leads to successful outcomes. For this reason, if one uses hearing devices to assist in communication, then it is recommended that those devices be worn during the sporting activity.



➤ Most hearing devices themselves are IP-rated for use in non-favorable conditions such as in water or with excessive sweat or debris. Accessory kits also exist that allow for even greater protection in these environments. Retention cords and headbands can be used to hold devices in place as well as to prevent loss. If questions or concerns arise about maintaining device usage during sporting activities, hearing healthcare professionals can help to facilitate a plan for care and use.

The literature continues to document the benefits of sports for those with hearing loss. From improving vestibular function and physical conditioning to enhancing self-esteem and social skills, sports can be transformative when played safely and responsibly.

[successforkidswithhearingloss.com/](https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/)

[hearandnow.cochlear.com/hearing-solutions/cochlear-implants/athletes-with-cochlear-implants/](https://hearandnow.cochlear.com/hearing-solutions/cochlear-implants/athletes-with-cochlear-implants/)

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# Revisiting Alarm Clocks for Home and Travel!

Hearing a standard alarm clock can be challenging for people with hearing loss. However, different alarm clock alerting systems are available for people with hearing loss.



Many companies sell alarm systems with numerous capabilities; you can pick one that suits your individual needs. Listed below are three of the most common options on the market for alarm clock alerting systems designed for individuals with hearing loss:

- › **Light Indicator:** A light will activate when the doorbell rings, a baby is crying or makes any sound, a fire alarm sounds and/or a phone rings. The light indicator can be a stand-alone strobe light or a designated lamp.
- › **Vibration Indicator:** This works similarly to the light-up indicator; however instead of a light activating, this will alert you through a device that vibrates. You can wear a watch, use your cellphone, wear a bracelet

and/or an Apple Watch. The vibration indication alarm clock is a great option when you're in multiple rooms at home and it's inconvenient to check for visual alerts.



- › **Amplification:** Some auditory systems use increased amplification to make the alert loud. These typically also use lower frequency sounds to make the alerts audible for people with hearing loss.

## List of vendors that supply these systems:

The customer service teams at the following companies can help guide you in finding the best solution to meet your lifestyle and needs:

- [www.diglo.com](http://www.diglo.com)
- [hearmore.com](http://hearmore.com)
- [lssproducts.com/alerting-devices](http://lssproducts.com/alerting-devices)
- [teltex.com](http://teltex.com)

# Discover Our Latest Developments

In a recent publication in *The Annals of Otolaryngology, Rhinology & Laryngology*, titled "Cochlear Implantation in Children with a Long Average Duration of Single-Sided Deafness," Dr. Katrina Stidham, Chief of the Division of Neurotology at the Department of Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery and Director of the Cochlear Implant Center, explores the performance trends of cochlear implants (CI) in patients with single-sided deafness (SSD) who underwent implantation during late childhood and adolescence. The publication of this article was also supported by Dr. Samantha Morgan and Dr. Rivka Bornstein, with significant contributions from medical student Christine Cola Sacco.

The findings of the study shed light on the potential benefits of CI for children with SSD, despite prolonged periods of deafness prior to implantation. Notably, the results revealed a remarkable 24% increase in median word scores and a substantial 64% increase in median sentence recognition scores in quiet environments with the use of a CI.



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