

April 11, 2011

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

Attention: Maria Ellis, MedCAC Panel Comment Cochlear Implants for Sensorineural Hearing Loss, May 11, 2011

Dear Sirs,

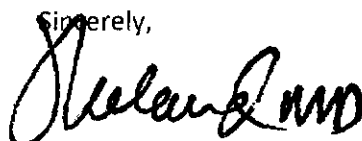
I have been actively involved with all aspects of the management of hearing loss and the implementation of cochlear implants for those that get no good benefit from traditional hearing amplification. The benefits of unilateral cochlear implantation in patients with severe to profound hearing loss and speech discrimination ability below 60 % is well documented in the medical literature. In fact, there are several interesting projects underway at this time that will verify the significant benefits of cochlear implantation in the deaf ear in patients with unilateral hearing loss (single sided deafness) and with residual low frequency hearing and speech discrimination scores in the better ear up to 80% (the hybrid or EAS projects) using electrical and acoustical hearing in the same ear.

Bilateral cochlear implantation also provides many benefits to hearing impaired children and adults that include sound localization, better hearing in noise, auditory redundancy and improved overall auditory performance. I regularly have asked our bilateral CI recipients if they have any regrets, and all of them (several hundred) say, "I can not imagine going back to only one CI again."

I am certain that you have received many letters and copies of the medical literature that documents outcomes with bilateral and unilateral CI. Speech discrimination scores (sentences and words) routinely exceed 90% and 70% correct respectively. This compares to the scores of 40, 50 and 60 % preoperatively.

As someone who has "grown up" in the age of the CI, I strongly recommend that this panel continue to support the advancements in the field and continue to support funding for bilateral and unilateral CI in patients with speech scores in the 40, 50 and less than 60% range. The outcomes are extraordinary.

Sincerely,



J. T. Roland, Jr., M.D.