

Taichung

The First Union of Cochlear Implant Recipients January 19, 2013

Since the first cochlear implant operation in 2004, Tzu Chi Medical Mission has served more than 70 patients with hearing impairments. Recently, the Otolaryngology (ENT) Department in Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital created a support group, “Electronica Club,” for patients and their families to gain and provide mutual supports. On January 19th, the first union of these patients was held at the Jing Si Books & Cafe at Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital.

Around 60 cochlear implant patients – children, adults and their families, came to the union. Shih-Chieh Huang, the first cochlear implant patient of Dr. Hung-Pin Wu and of Tzu Chi Medical Mission, joined the gathering, so did a twelve-month old baby Chen, who completed his surgery only two days ago, came with his parents. Vice Supt. Peir-Rong Chen, an active promoter of cochlear implant came all the way from Hualien to participate. During his speech, Dr. Chen expressed his appreciation and gratitude to the endeavors of Dir. Wu and his medical team, as well as his mentor Kai-Nan Lin, who proposed the idea of cochlear implant



Patient Ting-Ting who recently had her Cochlear implant, thanks Dr. Wu(left) that she finally hears the sound of wind.

to Master Cheng Yen and subsequently benefited numerous families.

As Dir. Wu shared in his speech, cochlear implant surgery once required a 10 cm incision. Now, thanks to the introduction of minimally invasive approach, the incision is minimized to 3 cm only and the implant only 0.04 cm in size. Not only does it reduce the recovery time, the device can be activated only 48 hours after surgery. This, in turn, allows quick verification of the surgical result. Baby Chen, who had just received an implant, went through a successful activation the following day. The combination of new cochlear implant and improved surgical methods allow patients to hear much more subtle sounds. Hsiao

Ting, a cochlear implant patient who received the surgery not so long ago, began to pick up subtle sounds like wind breeze and footsteps that were inaudible to him previously.

Hearing Is Only the First Step

Cochlear implantation is only the first step to regaining hearing. The subsequent “Hearing and Speech Training” is vital to accurate comprehension and pronunciation. Dir. I-Ping Chang of National Women’s League Taichung Chapter is experienced in such training. She would play a speech simulating the sound perceived by the cochlear implant, and the listeners have to distinguish the subtleties among similar words such as took, look, cook and book. The patients looked at one another, unable to comprehend the content of the monotonic, robot-like speech. After the implant, sound becomes audible to these patients, but in the aforementioned quality. To be able to comprehend the content, Dir. Chang said, hearing and speech training is essential. She encouraged the patients’ families to conduct frequent training sessions with the patients to improve the quality of listening and speaking.

For children with cochlear implants, the pressure they endure, in addition to their environment, comes from their parents. Dir. I-Chia Lin of Social Services

indicated that parents should be aware that their guilt towards their children, as it might manifest into parental stress and cause the children to withdraw. If the parents can address the child’s hearing deficit positively, not only will this relieve the pressure on themselves and improve their psychological conditions, but also better support their children’s physical and mental development, Dir. Lin pointed out.

Mutual Support And Encouragement among Patients

Yung-Chun Chen, a gentleman in his early 50’s, had an acute hearing loss



Chih-Kui Hsu (left) shared the experiences he had encountered with his cochlear implant with another patient, Yung-Chun Chen.

in July 2012. After his cochlear implant surgery in December, he was very happy to be able to hear again. During the intermission, he sought out another patient similar to his age, Chih-Kui Hsu, and chat about their experiences with the implant. Hsu, who had the implant two years prior, was quite experienced. Not only did he solved many of Chen's inquiries, but also informed him of potential challenges in the future. Ju and Ting, who were friends from the Hearing and Speech Training Institute since they were young, quickly

chatted when they met. Ju had the implant only recently, and she was shy as a result of her poor language competency. Ting, who was experienced with the implant, encouraged her to engage in conversations with others, and study their lip movements to improve her own.

This first gathering of so many cochlear implant patients and their families in one place encouraged many to share their experiences. They have made a vow with the medical team to hold a reunion!



Dr. Hung-Pin Wu, Director of ENT Department, explained the recent cochlear implant surgical procedures. The new method allows the patients to hear much more subtle sounds.