



AMERICAN COCHLEAR IMPLANT ALLIANCE

Research. Advocacy. Awareness



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Message from the Chair

Oliver F. Adunka MD

William H. Saunders MD Endowed Professor

Vice Chairman for Clinical Operations

Director, Otolaryngology, Neurotology & Cranial Base Surgery

Department Otolaryngology, Head & Neck Surgery & Neurosurgery

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

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Change is often associated with more demanding periods in our lives; that's why we often try to resist or avoid it. While change can be challenging, it can also bring personal growth and opportunities that would otherwise not be available. When reflecting on my personal life, positive events were often the result of changes that occurred in the past. Similar to our personal stories, the ACI Alliance will need to constantly change to adapt to the ever-changing landscape. As such, our new strategic plan initiative wrapped up during our March 2023 Board Retreat in Dallas, TX.

This new document will provide a detailed roadmap for the

Donna L. Sorkin, *Editor*

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Clinical Faculty, University of Washington

Donna L Sorkin MA

Ex Officio Board Member

future of our organization. (See Summary of the 2023 Strategic Plan page 5.) However, as with many things, the process of generating this document is as valuable as the document itself. I wanted to say thank you to Donna and the ACI Alliance staff as well as our strategic planning consulting team led by Gary Stern. Gary's leadership has been tremendous during the process and the new strategic plan is a product of his engagement with a large number of stakeholders, including sister societies. We are proud to share the summary of this document here and on our website. The plan builds on our overarching goals of research, awareness, and advocacy as well as organizational goals that will strengthen the ACI Alliance and its stakeholders.

As we are on the topic of change, the upcoming conference in Dallas will also be my final conference as a member of the Board of Directors as my 6-year term (and two years as the Chair of the Board) is coming to an end. It was an absolute honor to serve this community in this role. My career has been centered around cochlear implants since the late 1990s and I have seen my fair share of change. In particular, I remember the days of body worn speech processors and routine hospital admissions following cochlear implant surgery. I was lucky enough having been part of the birth of hearing preservation cochlear implantation and its evolution and the more recent FDA approval of single sided deafness indications. I remember the days when congenitally hearing-impaired children were implanted between two and three years of age and how the passion of the stakeholders in our field has helped to lower it to 9 months of age.

I wrote about this for one of my previous columns, but it feels pertinent to repeat that the ACI Alliance is truly the only organization that solely exists to move the field of cochlear implantation forward. I can gladly say that I feel proud that I was given the opportunity to lead the Board of Directors of such a remarkable society and would like to express my gratitude for trusting me during these tumultuous times. Dr. Andrea Warner-Czyz, who has been on the Board for five years and who knows the organization as well as anyone, has been nominated to assume the position of the next Chair of the Board. Her nomination and that of other proposed board members will be voted on to become new organizational leaders at the session "Moving the Field Forward" on Friday morning in Dallas. (See page 8.) Thanks to Andrea's proven track record of leadership and the members of the Board, the updated strategic plan, and our excellent staff lead by Donna Sorkin, I am confident that the ACI Alliance will continue to grow and flourish.



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Help your patients engage with life and experience the comfort of the world's smallest and lightest behind-the-ear cochlear implant sound processor.¹

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smaller

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An Updated Strategic Plan to Lead Us Forward

Donna L. Sorkin MA / Executive Director
American Cochlear Implant Alliance [dsorkin@acialliance.org/](mailto:dsorkin@acialliance.org)

Strategic planning, properly implemented, is an ongoing process for an organization. In the case of a relatively small entity with a specific and unique focus like ACI Alliance, having a plan in place helps to ensure that we are prioritizing our efforts and allocating resources to address our priorities. As we embarked on our plan revision last year, we gathered information from our members and from a number of key organizations. Interviews were conducted with organizations in the hearing loss community—both nonprofit and for-profit entities. We asked those surveyed to candidly share with us what they thought we did well and where we could improve. Our Board of Directors then took that valuable body of input from a range of sources and utilized it to update our Strategic Plan. While we have stayed true to our founders' original vision,

we have taken on a number of new priorities in the updated plan. Some of our early priorities have been accomplished, such as the Medicare expansion and hence don't appear in this updated plan.

Business leaders note that the strategic plan is not in itself an event but rather a process that is continually evolving. We know that new opportunities (and threats) will present themselves in the future. Ongoing assessment of where we are and where we want to be will continue to be inherent to our organization's planning process. A key benefit of having a plan in place and communicating it, as we are doing here, is that the organization can create a forward-focused vision with which our members and collaborators can align. It is our hope that each of our members will feel a responsibility to join us in carrying out our mission.



Top Five 2022 ACI Alliance Accomplishments

- Published three papers on CI candidacy and management on children with SSD or bilateral deafness and SSD adults endorsed by the American Academy of Audiology and recognized by Ear and Hearing with their Readers' Choice Award
- Completed expansion initiative for Medicare candidacy, improving CI access for older adults
- Supported successful State Champion efforts to expand Medicaid candidacy in multiple states
- Completed review of 50 state EHDI websites and initiated a national conversation on early intervention information for parents and others
- Improved accuracy and coverage of web-based cochlear implant information via our own website and others



Board of Directors meeting in March 2023 finalizing the Strategic Plan

American Cochlear Implant Alliance 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Summary

Approved by Board of Directors
March 25, 2023

Mission

The mission of the American Cochlear Implant (ACI) Alliance is to advance access to the gift of hearing provided by cochlear implantation through research, advocacy and awareness.

Goals

- 1) Encourage and support research on candidacy, criteria and the broad impacts of cochlear implants for children and adults
- 2) Advance awareness of best practices related to cochlear implants among patients and their families, clinicians including primary care doctors and other health professionals, early interventionists, educators, policy makers, payers and the general public
- 3) Educate and encourage policy makers and payers to take steps that expand access to cochlear implants
- 4) Build an effective, sustainable organization

Research

- Focus on knowledge gaps relative to access to care factors
- Disseminate key findings and initiate action plans on ACI Alliance ongoing sponsored research including societal costs and cost utility of CI in severe to profound hearing loss, CI underutilization, listening fatigue, and quality of life
- Encourage clinical research on topics related to the CI process, outcomes, and access barriers
- Utilize the annual CI conference as a means of sharing clinical research of importance to the larger community
- Continue research on state EHDI websites provision of key information and how to implement improvement
- Expand research on adult

perceptions and disseminate findings to support communication and facilitate CI decision-making

- Consider development of position statements on topics that impact on access and awareness such as hearing restoration; impact of geographic, socio-economic and cultural diversity on access; CI and CMV

Awareness

- Address confusion amongst educational professionals, parents, and the general public including news outlets on “language deprivation” in children with hearing loss
- Develop and disseminate content for EHDI websites to support families in their hearing loss journey
- Increase early integration of CI information through a continuum of care approach by the advising and dispensing communities
- Promote hearing health as “whole health” with primary care organizations and practitioners
- Co-design and conduct national and international CI symposia highlighting research, clinical issues, (re) habilitation, quality of life/cost effectiveness, health care policy, and insurance issues using a multi-disciplinary scientific program committee
- Collaborate and utilize the opportunity to reach diverse audiences through others’ meetings, webinars, and publications
- Review and provide input on the accuracy of information provided by others via news outlets, websites, and other formats

Advocacy

- Collaborate with like-minded advocacy coalitions to address a wide range of CI and hearing loss topics
- Provide coalition leadership to seek/offer appropriate EHDI services and parent information for the family decision-making
- Expand State Champion program with direct advocacy for CI access

and related services at state, local and national levels

- Engage consumers and parents to contribute importantly to our advocacy efforts
- Work with members and partners on outreach to stakeholders to address state issues such as Medicaid coverage and payment
- Work with HRSA and others to improve information provided to parents and general public via websites and other mechanisms
- Collaborate with National CMV Foundation to advance state-level legislation for screening and education
- Maintain engagement with CMS regarding access to CI and related services to address underrepresented groups
- Expand discussions with insurance companies to influence appropriate coverage of CIs
- Participate in hearing loss and general disability organizations
- Lead member advocacy efforts in Washington to expand knowledge about cochlear implants and issues of access with virtual and in-person “Day on the Hill” events
- In collaboration with other organizations, develop and disseminate multi-disciplinary clinical practice guidelines and undertake efforts that promote cochlear implantation as the standard of care treatment within non-hearing loss disciplines

Build a Sustainable Organization

- Increase membership to reach at least 3000 members
- Consider establishing membership sections (SIGs) for students, members with hearing loss, and other special interests
- Utilize best practices for board and staff performance
- Maintain an active committee structure to carry out the work of the organization

CI2023 Dallas: It's almost HEAR!



Kara Leyzac AuD, PhD / Co-Chair,
CI2023 Dallas Program Committee,
Medical University of South Carolina



Aaron C. Moberly MD / Co-Chair,
CI2023 Dallas Program Committee,
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Ear we go again! We are rapidly approaching CI2023 in Dallas on June 7-10, 2023! We hope you are as excited as we are about our all-star lineup of ear-resistible invited speakers, podium presentations, panels, and posters.

We have four major focus topics to stimulate your eyes and ears this year:

- Considerations for limited English proficiency patients
- Genetics of hearing loss relevant to CI outcomes
- Cytomegalovirus (CMV) and cochlear implantation
- Cochlear implantation at both ends of the age spectrum (< 9 months, > 90 years)

We are thrilled about our invited speakers! Carolyn Brown, PhD, Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Iowa, will be this year's esteemed Niparko Lecturer, and will share her historical perspective and seminal research in her talk "Cochlear Implants at IOWA: 1983 to 2023." Our keynote speakers will address some of this year's conference themes. Ferenc Bunta, PhD, Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Houston, will present on "Speech and Language Production of Bilingual Children with Cochlear Implants: Highlights and Clinical Implications." Be sure to explore the program for other podium and poster presentations on this topic to include management of bilingual patients and improving cultural awareness in our practice. We will be all ears for Pablo Sanchez, MD, Professor of Pediatrics at Ohio State University and Nationwide Children's Hospital, as he presents his keynote lecture "Congenital CMV Infection and Hearing Loss: It's Time to Screen!" This very timely presentation will touch upon a highly important



movement in pediatrics to increase awareness of CMV and recent efforts to pass legislation requiring education for expecting mothers and newborn screenings. There will be several podium and poster presentations that examine CMV and hearing loss related to cochlear implant outcomes.

CI2023 will feature the return of the (Re)Habilitation Connect Forum, with themes centered around children and adults with CIs. This will be an engaging session designed to promote ear-refutable evidence-based (re)habilitation. Last but not least, this year's conference will feature another Stump the Experts panel (back by popular demand!) led again by Meredith Holcomb AuD and Daniel Zeitler MD. One never before presented novel panel will feature the importance of coordinators and collaborators as part of the cochlear implant team entitled "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work." For the full program and additional details on CI2023 please go to: <https://ci-2023dallas.org/>

We are grateful to the Conference Scientific Program Committee, the presenters, staff and ACI Alliance Board of Directors for their contributions to the conference development. Please join us June 7-10, 2023, at The Hyatt Regency Dallas Hotel, Dallas, Texas. We can't wait to see and hear you there!

Kudos to the Scientific Program Committee

Daniel M. Zeitler MD / ACI Alliance Board Member

Co-Director Listen for Life Center and CI Program Virginia Mason Franciscan Health (Seattle)

As we approach CI2023 in Dallas, the excitement continues to build among ACI Alliance members, colleagues and friends who are attending. We could not be more excited about the wonderful program that has been organized and the scientific sessions that have been developed, not to mention the incredible key-note speakers. None of this could have been possible without the tireless and dedicated work of the 2023 CI Conference Program Committee. We, as a Board, would like to recognize the members of the Committee and identify members who will complete their term of service this year (designated here with a star).



2023 CI Conference Program Committee

Kara Leyzac AuD, PhD (Co-Chair);
Medical University of SC*

Aaron Moberly MD (Co-Chair);
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Matthew Bush MD PhD; University of
Kentucky Medical Center*

Ivette Cejas PhD; University of Miami
Nicholas Deep MD; Mayo Clinic
Arizona

Jolie Fainberg AuD; Atlanta Institute
for ENT

Heather Grantham PhD; Washington
University School of Medicine*

Eun Kyung (Julie) Jeon PhD, AuD;
University of Iowa

Kenneth H. Lee MD, PhD; UT
Southwestern Medical Center

Nancy K. Mellon MS; The River
School

Sarah Mowry MD; University
Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center*

Lisa Park AuD; University of North
Carolina

Elicia Pillion AuD; Walter Reed
Medical Center

Elizabeth Rosenzweig PhD, SLP,
LSLS Cert. AVT; Teachers College,
Columbia University

Heidi Slager AuD; University of
Michigan

Holly Teagle AuD; University of
Auckland, New Zealand*

Viral Tejani AuD, PhD; University
Hospital Cleveland

Ellen Thomas MA, SLP, LSLS Cert.
AVT; University of Michigan

We welcome incoming members
of the CI Conferences Program
Committee who will be working with
the existing committee members
to plan CI2024, the International
Conference in Vancouver (CA) July
10-13, 2024. They include:

Karen Gordon PhD University of
Toronto (CA)

Barbara Hecht PhD; Clarke Schools
for Hearing and Speech

David Horn MD; Seattle Children's
Hospital

Jacob Hunter MD; Jefferson Balance
and Hearing Center

Rebecca Lewis AuD; Nationwide
Children's Hospital

Alexandria Mestres MS; University of
Miami

Esther Vivas MD; Emory University
Hospital

Brian Westerberg MD; University of
British Columbia (CA)

**A special thank you to this year's
Co-Chairs, Kara Leyzac and Aaron
Moberly, on a job wonderfully well
done. Please make sure to say
hello and a give them a big thank
you when you see them in Dallas.**

* Departing Members

CI2023 Dallas at a Glance

Conference Dates

Wednesday, June 7-10, 2023

Conference Website

www.CI2023Dallas.org (links to abstracts, registration, hotel, updates)

ACI Alliance Detailed Information

<https://www.acialliance.org/page/CI2023>

Welcome & Opening Session with Niparko Lecture

Thursday, June 8, 2023

Hotel and Meeting Venue

Hyatt Regency Dallas

Hotel Reservation Deadline

May 12 for assured group rate

CI Manufacturer Satellite Symposia

Wednesday, June 7

1:00-2:15 / Advanced Bionics

2:45-4:00 / Cochlear Americas

4:30-5:45 / MED-EL

CI Manufacturer Breakfast Symposia

Thursday (AB), Friday (MED-EL),
Saturday (Cochlear Americas)

Poster Exhibit Session

Thursday, June 8, 2023, 4:45-5:45

Welcome Reception

Thursday, June 8, 2023, 5:45-7:15

Moving the Field Forward

Friday, June 9, 2023, 8:40-9:45

More CI 2023 Dallas Details

There will be new offerings in Dallas including the introduction of Special Interest Groups (SIGs); discussion of evolving topics like the Cytomegalovirus in keynotes, podium talks, and posters; and an historical look at how much the CI intervention has evolved during the John Niparko Memorial Lecture being given by Carolyn Brown PhD as well as an engaging panel of early CI innovators interacting on what it was like to develop, provide, and receive CIs in the very early years. Take a look at the detailed agenda and make your final plans to be in Dallas!

Dr. Peter Roland to Receive the ACI Alliance 2023 Lifetime Achievement Award at the Opening



As a cochlear implant pioneer, Dr. Roland was involved in provision of CIs to patients from the time the device was first approved by the FDA in 1984. He advanced interest in use of electro-acoustic hearing, bilateral cochlear implants, and benefits for people of all ages. Prior to his retirement, he was Professor and Chairman of the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery and Professor of Neurological Surgery at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, and the Chief of Pediatric Otology at Children's Medical Center. He authored over 150 publications on ear surgery, cochlear implants, hearing loss, balance disturbance, facial nerve injury, acoustic neuroma and tumors of the skull base. Beyond his contributions to clinical care and research, Dr. Roland is known for his boundless sense of humor and breadth of knowledge of art history, literacy and philosophy. He is also an accomplished skier. <https://www.acialliance.org/page/LifetimeAchievementAward>

Continuing Education at CI2023

Continuing education credits will be available to CI2023 Dallas attendees. In recent years CEU credits have ranged from 1.5 to 2.5, while CME credits have ranged between 11.75 and 14.0. Once determined, the CI2023 credits offered by each accreditator will be listed on the website [Continuing Education](#) page.

Accreditation for CEU and CME credits will be requested from the accrediting organizations based on meeting registrants' completion and submission of online claim forms available during the meeting period of 6/7/2023 through 6/11/2023. Reporting dates are set by accrediting organizations.

New Special Interest Groups (SIGs) Forming

To provide an opportunity for like-minded members to meet and network, ACI Alliance will convene SIG lunches around three topics during CI2023 Dallas. Please contact ACI Alliance staff member Jessica Houk at jhouk@acialliance with any questions.

Hearing Health Professionals

Hearing Health Professionals with Hearing Loss will facilitate sharing of experiences, networking, collaboration, and learning about available resources.

To be led by Viral Tejani Viral.Tejani@UHhospitals.org

When/Where: Friday Lunchtime, Windsor Room (Atrium Level)

Register here: <https://www.acialliance.org/event/MembersHearingLoss>

Students, Fellows, and Residents

Students, Fellows, and Residents in attendance at CI2023 are encouraged to join the discussion. We will begin with a panel and then open the conversation up on next steps and career goals. This is a great way to network with other students and learn from those who recently walked in your footsteps. Gain tips on the interview process and how to put your best self forward in the most positive manner.

To be led by Jordan McNair AuD jim4208@med.miami.edu and Kevin Zhan MD Zhan zhank@wustl.edu

When/Where: Thursday Lunchtime, Windsor Room (Atrium Level)

Register here: <https://www.acialliance.org/event/studentlunchci2023>

Aural Rehabilitation for Adult Cochlear implant Recipients

Aural Rehabilitation for Adult Cochlear implant Recipients is not widely available. Join other interested CI team members to explore the reasons why some programs elect to provide AR for adults, while others do not. Discuss the results of a March 2023 survey sent to ACI Alliance members on the topic. To be lead by James Saunders MD james.e.saunders@hitchcock.org and Pam Dawson M.Ed pdawson@hear-me-now.org

When/Where: Friday Lunchtime, Cockrell Room (Atrium Level)

Register here: <https://www.acialliance.org/event/adultrehab>

Nominations to the Board of Directors

At the plenary session "Moving the Field Forward" on Friday morning in Dallas, the membership will vote on the 2023 Slate for Nomination to the Board of Directors:

For Chair of the Board 2023-2024:
Andrea Warner Czyz PhD

For Board of Directors 2023-2025:

- Kristen Lewis AuD
- Lindsay Zombek MS, CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT
- Matthew L. Bush MD, PhD, MBA
- Maura Cosetti MD

2023 Advocacy

Nichole J. Westin MA / Government Affairs Manager
ACI Alliance / nwestin@acialliance.org

Congenital Cytomegalovirus (cCMV) affects approximately 1 per every 200 births in the United States and is the most common cause of non-hereditary hearing loss. Infants are infected due to exposure of the mother who often is unaware they had cCMV due to the mild, cold-like symptoms in adults. cCMV is responsible for hearing loss in 1 in 5 children who have no other known risk factor or cause. Hearing loss related to cCMV may not be present at birth, but rather delayed in onset and hence would be missed by newborn hearing screening and may fluctuate or progress during childhood.

Over the past few years, cCMV has become such an important issue to the ACI Alliance community. It is one of three highlighted keynote topics in the CI2023 Dallas conference schedule. We continue to partner with the National CMV Foundation to share information and promote state legislation. The CMV Foundation will again be exhibiting at the upcoming June conference. The February Tuesday Talk by Dr. Cedric Pritchett was on cCMV and included two emotional stories from parents.

Current State Laws

As of May 2023, seventeen states had implemented some form of cCMV screening law. ACI Alliance first supported cCMV screening in Virginia in 2018, guided by State Champion Stephanie Moody MD. Since then, State Champions in

Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and Florida successfully advocated for legislation in their respective states. Last year there was an increase in the number of bills introduced supporting CMV screening after a newborn fails newborn hearing screening and a number of our Champs are leading exploratory efforts.

Minnesota (MN) became the first state to implement screening for CMV separate from the universal newborn hearing screening protocol. Screening in Minnesota began in February 2023; state representatives presented early results at the 2023 Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Conference. In the first four weeks of the MN program, six babies were identified as having cCMV; of those, only one had failed the newborn hearing screening. This finding supports implementation of cCMV screening as a stand-alone test rather than a test that occurs only after a child fails a hearing test or presents with additional health factors.

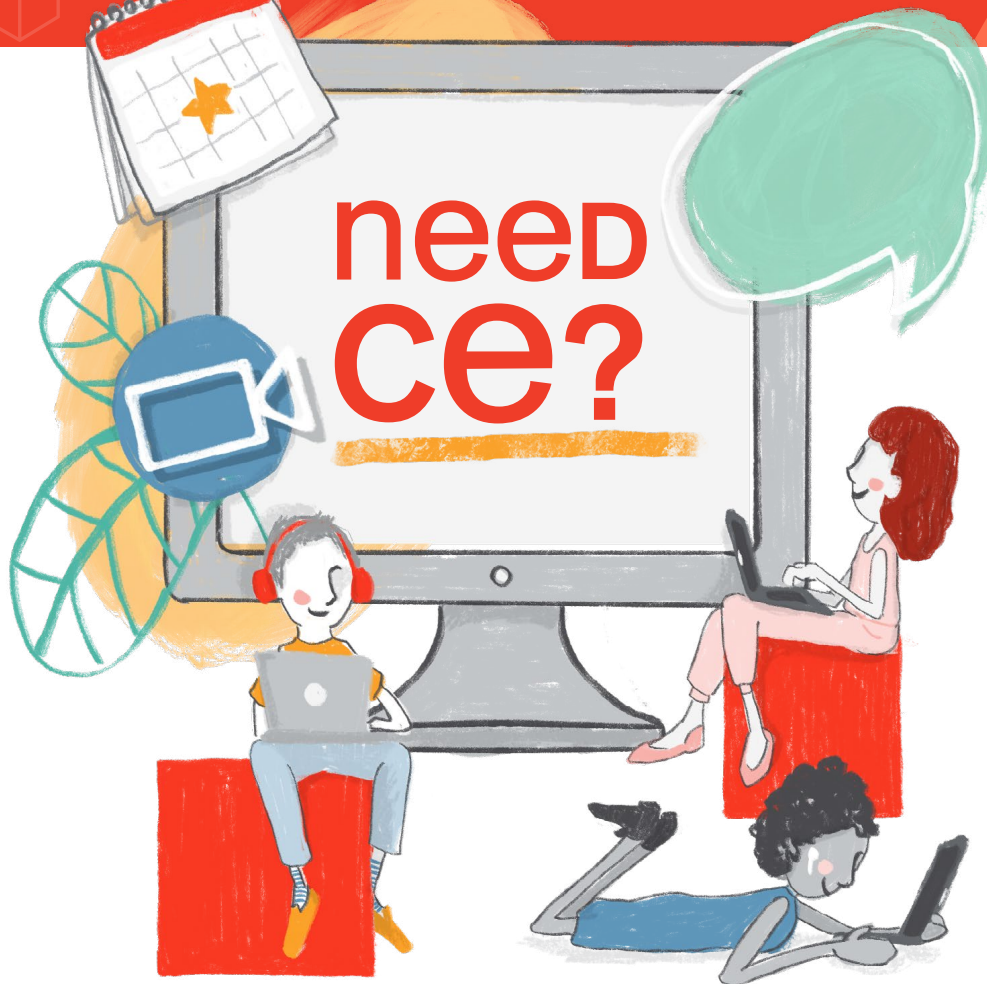
As we move through 2023, a number of states are already working on possible CMV legislation. Bills have been filed in Florida (universal screening), Texas, Michigan, New York, and California. ACI Alliance State Champs are actively exploring avenues for future bills in Delaware, Washington DC, and Maryland. Our advocates are joined by other health organizations including the National CMV Foundation, parents, and clinicians to change policy and make positive changes. ACI Alliance staff will continue to support these efforts



and work to bring interested parties together.

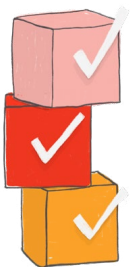
What does the Future Hold?

Currently, there is no pending national legislation for education or screening relative to cCMV. Along with other organizations and advocates, we are exploring avenues for a federal approach to address cCMV screening. We hope to ensure that screening for cCMV is included in universal screening with necessary funding. As more organizations recognize the impact of cCMV on children, we are hopeful that increasing the volume of all of our voices will move the needle for change.



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Never, Ever Give Up!

Faith E. Shoemaker-Shiffert M.Ed., J.D. / ACI Alliance Georgia State Champion

On Mar. 29, 2023, in the last hour and last minutes of the last day of the 2023 Georgia Legislative session, the Georgia General Assembly passed its 2024 Fiscal Year (FY) Appropriations bill known as House Bill (HB) 19. This is not surprising because appropriation bills are often the last item on the agenda. What is surprising is a particular HB 19 directive to the Georgia Department of Community Service (DCH) to “extend coverage for cochlear implants beyond 21 years of age for those Medicaid recipients who already have them prior to age 21” (HB 19 page 60 of 264 pages, Part I, Section 17, line 88.14).

After a Conference Committee affirming vote, both chambers of the 2023 Georgia General Assembly overwhelmingly passed HB 19 with this directive. The Senate floor votes were 54 Y (Yay), 1 N (Nay), 0 NV (Not Voting), and 1Abs (Absent). The

House floor votes were 170 Y, 3 N, 1 NV and 6 Abs. The Georgia DCH and its Medical Assistance Plan Division also supported the passage of HB 19 with this directive. HB 19 indicates there are “\$0 dollars” for this directive because Georgia’s DCH agreed to absorb the costs for this directive within its budget.

According to Part II of HB 19, the effective date for this bill is “upon the approval of the Governor or upon it becoming law without such approval.” While this effective date is somewhat nebulous, Georgia appropriations usually begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the subsequent year. Although it is hopeful that the HB 19 directed CI coverage extension will begin on July 1, some additional steps must be taken prior to this coverage and directive taking effect. These steps include the DCH receiving approval from the Federal Medicaid Office for expenditure of



its funds for this purpose and for DCH to approve a modification of their current policy 805.8 “Hearing Prosthetics.” This policy currently states that the repair and replacement of cochlear implants are only covered for members under age 21.

The journey for passage of this CI directive by the General Assembly began like a pebble thrown into the pond. It began approximately one year ago with a Georgia DCH denial, based on its 805.8 policy, of a needed external CI processor replacement for my daughter. This awareness was amplified by a request from my daughter’s audiologist for older, spare CI parts to help others similarly situated as my daughter. As a result, I became an ACI Alliance State Champion for the State of Georgia and learned of the efforts in other states to obtain Medicaid CI coverage for citizens 21+ years of age. Over several months, I attempted many times to contact the Georgia DCH regarding this policy without success. At that point, I was certain a change to the Georgia DCH policy 805.8 would not be possible.



GA State Senator Matt Brass and the author's daughter, Katie Shiffert.

However, after many prayers for direction, I was prompted to contact my Georgia state senator, who became a strong advocate for this effort and who provided me with the correct contact information for the DCH Executive Director of its Medical Assistance Plan Division. From that point forward, doors opened for the passage of this directive in Georgia HB 19.

I am very grateful to both my senator and representative and their staff, along with all the many individuals in Georgia and in the General

Assembly, who helped make this directive possible. We plan to continue working with the Georgia DCH, my Georgia state senator and representative, and the Georgia General Assembly, to make this directive permanent and to expand coverage to additional adult CI users in Georgia. So, never, ever give up even when it appears to be a David versus Goliath situation because there are always good people and organizations to help with a very worthy effort like this one. Like David, with the armor of God, prayers were answered! Georgia HB 19 with this directive can be viewed on the Georgia General

Assembly website (<https://www.legis.ga.gov/legislation/63506>).

Editor's Note: ACI Alliance State Champions are working to expand Medicaid in a number of states. We are delighted to announce a recent success in Washington State that expands CI coverage to adults. <https://www.acialliance.org/page/MedicaidMedicare> If you are interested in impacting CI access and public policy in your state, join us as a State Champion. Contact nwestin@acialliance.org for details.

Increasing Awareness of CI In and Out of Hearing Healthcare

Laura Odatto MPP / Director of Operations and Marketing / ACI Alliance / LOdatto@acialliance.org

Over the past several months, we have provided important learning opportunities for professionals who work outside of cochlear implantation. Additionally, the popular Tuesday Talks free webinar series for parents, adults and others was expanded.

Five-Part Webinar Series in collaboration with AudiologyOnline Adult Assessments in Hearing Healthcare: Working Across the Continuum

The series was a collaboration with AudiologyOnline that is designed to stimulate collaborative approaches for hearing health professionals, regardless of what hearing technologies individual professionally typically provide to patients. All webinars are now on demand [available on](#)

[the ACI Alliance website](#) and from AudiologyOnline.

Adult Assessments in Hearing Healthcare: Working Across the Continuum

Camille Dunn PhD, Susan Good AuD, MBA

The Roles of Audiologists and Dispensers Working with Hearing Aid Users in Cochlear Implant Candidacy

Alejandra Ullauri AuD, MPH

Utility of the New CI Quality of Life Instruments to Personalize and Improve CI Care

Ted McRackan MD, MSCR



Adult Perceptions of Hearing Status and Options: Professionals Facilitating a Life-long Hearing Journey

Donna L. Sorkin MA

Optimizing Outcomes in Hearing Technology: Hearing Aids and Implantable Devices

Rene Gifford PhD



Online CE series

Adult Assessments in Hearing Healthcare: Working Across the Continuum

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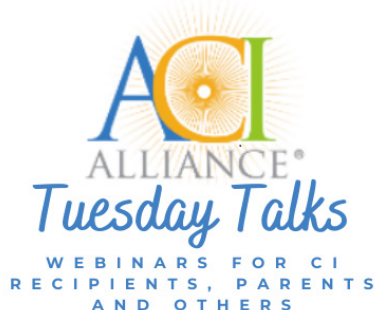
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Tuesday Talks Live Webinar Series to Conclude / Recorded Talks Now Available

Our 10-part series spanned a range of topics of interest to parents, adults and others including the evaluation process, (re)habilitation for adults and children, programming, CMV, IEPs, and surgery. The final live course in the series will be held on May 16 with Dr. Teresa Caraway's webinar Finding a Listening and Spoken Language Professional Who Meets Your Needs. The full series recorded line-up is here: [2022-23 Tuesday Talks webinar series](#)

ACI Alliance Task Force Guidelines Papers Win *Ear & Hearing* Awards

The prestigious awards were made March 3rd at the American Auditory Society

annual meeting in Scottsdale (AZ). The Readers' Choice Award is given to papers that have been accessed most often on the journal website and/or through the on-line portal. First authors Margaret Dillon AuD, PhD; Lisa Park AuD; and Andrea Warner-Czyz PhD received their awards in person.

Ear & Hearing published the three papers by ACI Alliance Task Forces on CI candidacy and management in 2022, papers developed to broaden understanding of CI candidacy determination and management in specific populations. The papers were endorsed by the American Academy of Audiology.

American Cochlear Implant Alliance Task Force Guidelines for Clinical Assessment and Management of Cochlear Implantation in Children With Single-Sided Deafness

Authors: Lisa R. Park, Amanda M. Griffin, Douglas P. Sladen, Sara

Neumann, Nancy M. Young

American Cochlear Implant Alliance Task Force Guidelines for Determining Cochlear Implant Candidacy in Children

Andrea D. Warner-Czyz, Thomas J. Roland Jr, Denise Thomas, Kristin Uhler, Lindsay Zombek

American Cochlear Implant Alliance Task Force Guidelines for Clinical Assessment and Management of Cochlear Implantation in Adults With Single- Sided Deafness

Authors: Margaret T. Dillon, Armine Kocharyan, Ghazal S. Daher, Matthew L. Carlson, William H. Shapiro, Hillary A. Snapp, Jill B. Firszt

The papers and shareable infographics may be accessed with links to *Ear and Hearing* [from the ACI Alliance website](#).

Lisa Park AuD, Margaret Dillon Aud, PhD, and Andrea Warner-Czyz PhD with awards at the American Auditory Society meeting



ACI Alliance Promotes Cochlear Implant Awareness with Hearing Instrument Specialists

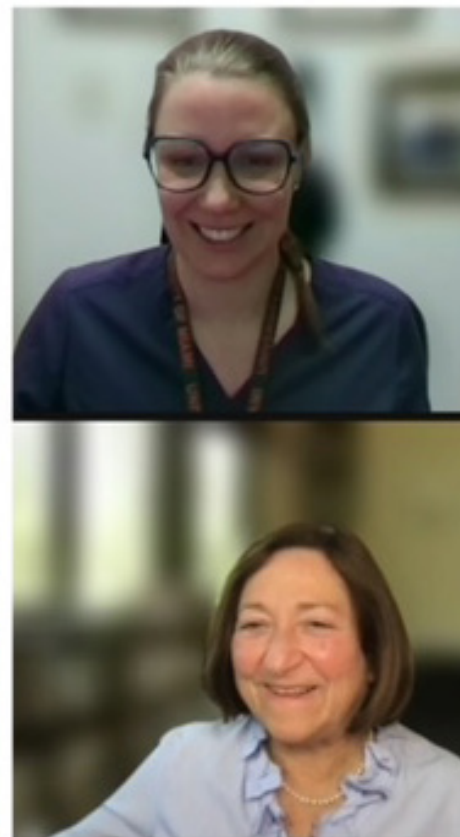
In April, ACI Alliance leaders Meredith Holcomb and Donna Sorkin continued our collaborative efforts with the International Hearing Society (IHS) to advance cochlear implant awareness with the IHS webinar [How to Help your Patients who Struggle to Hear Better \(and Love Your Services\)](#). The course was recorded and will be offered on demand.

The hour-long live course was attended by over 120 participants and was designed to support hearing instrument specialists who have patients who struggle to hear with hearing aids know how and when

to begin the discussion of cochlear implants (CI). Dr. Holcomb previously spoke at an IHS Focal Point session, a condensed format of 15 minutes of presentation and 15 minutes of Q&A.

In 2021, ACI Alliance began collaborating with IHS to offer resources on CI referrals noting that many adult CI patients continue to use a hearing aid on the contralateral ear. Dr. Holcomb and ACI Alliance staff member Laura Odato initially wrote on this effort in the [June 2021 issue of the Hearing Journal](#).

Moving forward, ACI Alliance will develop editorial for the IHS magazine *The Hearing Professional* with detail on CI candidacy, insurance coverage, bimodal hearing, how and how to refer patients who may benefit from CI. State chapters often seek speakers to discuss cochlear implant benefits and the referral process. Collaboration between ACI Alliance and IHS supports patients along the hearing continuum seek the right technology at the right time. We look forward to continuing our partnership offering webinars, written content, and other mechanisms to improve cochlear implant access.

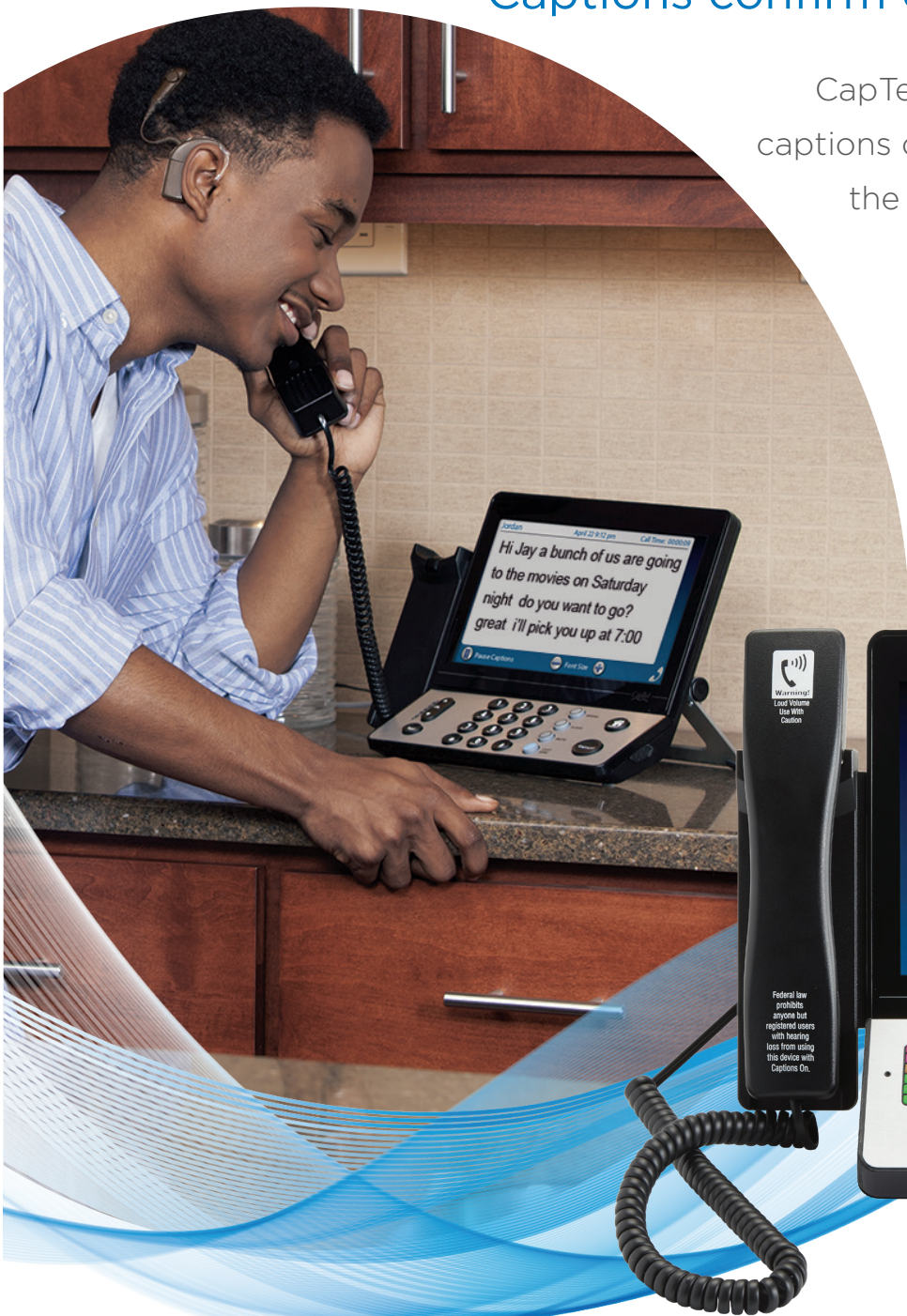


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A Young Adult CI Recipient's Perspective:

Growing Up Using Hearing Aids, Transitioning to Cochlear Implants, and Becoming my Own Best Advocate

Sam Mellert

I was born deaf and diagnosed with bilateral profound, sensorineural hearing loss. I was diagnosed at 18 months and shortly after, aided with hearing aids. I grew up learning spoken English as my primary form of communication. My older brother, who is also deaf, and I were the only children in our school district with hearing loss. I functioned very well with hearing aids all the way through elementary school. I benefitted from speech therapy, although I “graduated” out of that in third grade. In 2004, I found out that I might be eligible for a cochlear implant. While it was not an easy decision, seeing and hearing the experiences of my older brother and a few older high school and college age peers with cochlear implants helped me make my decision to move forward quickly.

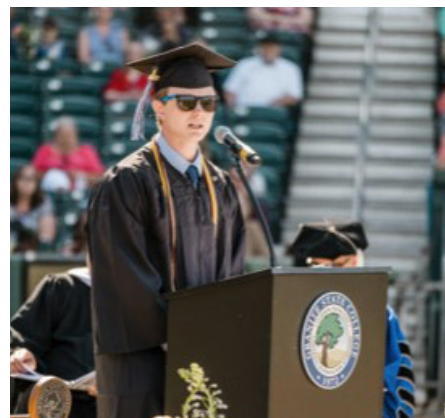
It's worth noting that for the first ten years of my life, I was painfully shy—even with peers I had grown up with and known my entire life. My go-to tactic in elementary school was “social bluffing”—nodding or chuckling at my peers and hoping that they asked me a “yes” or “no” question given I often had no idea what was said to me. This had behavioral ramifications. I would purposely put myself in the back of the lunch line to ensure nobody talked to me from behind, fake stomach aches during class discussions since the background noise made comprehension impossible. Strangers sometimes

scared me because their voices were unfamiliar, I had no fallback on what to ask or say, and no past history with their facial cues and expressions.

Within 6 months of receiving my first cochlear implant, I no longer needed to use social bluffing or find ways to circumvent normal social functioning. I could actually hear my peers and my teachers! My confidence exploded. I did things I previously never dreamed of doing including speaking to Dartmouth College medical students (in the town where I grew up), being on panels at cochlear implant conferences, and even leading my own 504 meetings!

During the remainder of my primary/secondary educational years, I thrived. I was a member of two varsity sports teams (golf and baseball), achieved my third-degree black belt in Taekwondo, and earned several academic awards while graduating in the top 15% of my class. I also earned academic awards from the Spanish department and had the opportunity to go on school trips to Spain and Nicaragua, where I was able to converse on behalf of my non-Spanish speaking classmates. None of this would have been possible without my cochlear implants.

While I did go right to college after graduating from high school, I ultimately decided to take some time away after one year for personal



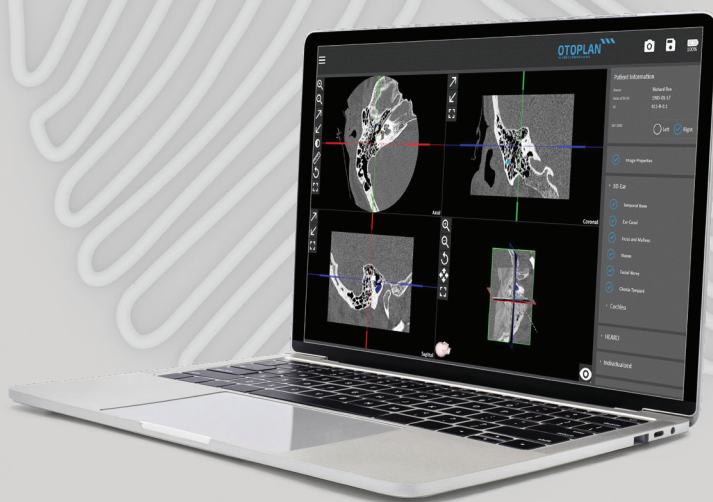
reasons. Flash forward several years—I went back to college and earned my Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Granite State College with a 4.0 GPA. I was selected to be the Student Commencement Speaker by the Board of Trustees of the University System of New Hampshire. From there, I was accepted into the MBA program at the University of New Hampshire where I have nearly completed my first year and am maintaining a 3.67 GPA. I did all of this while I was also working full-time as an administrative assistant for the University of New Hampshire (Durham).

Currently, I work in a department that serves undergraduate students at UNH, helping them develop all of the skills, strategies, and confidence needed to succeed in college. I bought my first home three years ago with my fiancée. Our favorite date-night activity is to go to concerts. We average 7-15 concerts each year! In my free time, I greatly enjoy fine woodworking and gardening projects for our home.

When I explored my candidacy for cochlear implants, I had no concept of how this hearing technology would change and enrich my life. Having struggled to hear in so many situations pre-CI, I recognize how cochlear implants make it possible for someone with a hearing profile and history like mine to go mainstream and truly excel.

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