



ACI Alliance Blog: Cochlear Implant Rehabilitation for Adults

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Cochlear Implant Rehabilitation for Adults, a blog offered by American Cochlear Implant Alliance, was launched in January 2016. It was initiated because of the scarcity of high-quality rehab guidance materials and direct rehab services available for adult CI recipients. Although adults comprise at least two-thirds of US cochlear implant users, the focus of (re)habilitation post CI surgery, has traditionally been on children. I was asked by ACI Alliance to organize the adult blog, write content, and facilitate submissions by others. With my 20 years of experience in working with adults and children with cochlear implants, I happily accepted the task of supporting adult CI recipients in their fascinating and challenging journey.

While parent-centered therapy with a trained professional is nearly universal with pediatric cochlear implantation in the US (and in most places around the world), adults are typically not offered the opportunity to participate in clinician-guided auditory rehabilitation programs. The reality is that most CI centers don't have sufficient personnel on staff who can offer such services to all. Nonetheless, many adults desire guidance in knowing what they can do to maximize benefits from their CI—apart from receiving mapping services from their audiologist, which is designed to improve access to sounds and not necessarily facilitate auditory *learning*. Many individuals do not know that they may benefit from such support. They may find themselves without sufficient family support. Sometimes this results in frustration and feelings of helplessness in not knowing what they might be doing to facilitate improved outcomes, use assistive listening devices, improve their ability to use the telephone, or function in challenging listening environments.

The ACI Alliance *Adult Rehabilitation Blog* explores a range of issues intended to support adult CI recipients including emotional matters, challenges, and tools and approaches that can

enhance listening and understanding. We address auditory learning broadly including understanding speech, identifying sounds in the environment, appreciating music, deciphering recorded speech, and conducting telephone conversations. We also support the needs of a group of CI recipients that was small in the past but is growing—those who had early childhood deafness and received cochlear implants as adults.

The blog explores the subjective meaning of success. Given we know that cochlear implantation typically improves recipients' quality of life, the blog addresses benefits beyond understanding speech such as socio-emotional aspects, listening effort, and a sense of well-being.

Since adult CI users seek ways to address their listening environment at home, at work and in social activities, some of the blog posts are intended to help them bridge unmet expectations and misunderstanding with family, co-workers and friends. Physical adaptations and better awareness of the challenges that they may encounter and what can be done about them can make important differences in recipients' motivation and ability to be involved and take part in social activities as well as their feelings of well-being. Posts are written for CI users as well as the significant people in their lives.

We have been privileged to have CI recipients and clinicians as special guest writers which complement the posts that I author. We are thankful for the contributions from all and encourage those who have ideas for posts to contact us. We are delighted and excited to receive inquiries from our readers—recipients and family members who find the blog helpful and relevant as well as clinicians who refer their patients to this platform.

The blog has been inspired by my adult CI patients. Though a blog cannot replace clinician-guided auditory rehabilitation, it can shed light on unclear topics, offer practical advice and support, and expand readers' perspectives regarding the process that they are experiencing.

