

Clinical outcomes and user experiences of deaf young people with sequential bilateral cochlear implants.

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Abstract

This study is an exploration of the clinical outcomes and the user experiences of twelve sequential bilateral cochlear implant users aged between 8 and 16 years (8 boys and 4 girls) who attend a residential specialist school for the deaf. The research design was a multiple case retrospective and prospective design and was carried out using a mixed methodological approach.

Qualitative data

A semi-structured interview was carried out in school to qualitatively explore both negative and positive user experiences. These interviews were transcribed verbatim and the raw data was clustered into five emerging themes.

Quantitative data

Objective speech tests were performed six months after each participants MAP was fully established and repeated on the day of their semi-structured interview. These test results using the Bench-Kowal Bamford (BKB) sentence lists were compared with their subjective accounts of their speech perception abilities to assess whether their accounts and experiences reflected their actual performance.

The results of these comparisons were varied and in most cases their speech test results were significantly better than they described. Seven out of the twelve participants had become full time users of their second implant and only two would not recommend sequential implantation to their peers. For the ten subjects who have become full time and school only users the reported benefits were varied and included: localisation, balance, volume and a general improvement in listening abilities. The findings of this study suggests that although the young people had expected difficulties and felt fully informed of what to expect only a small few fully comprehended the implications which left them ill-prepared for the commitment, time and perseverance required to make it bilateral sequential cochlear implantation a success. This current study provides a valuable contribution to the existing literature and a unique snapshot of the situation facing these particular young people.