

## Cochlear Implant Requiring Patients Left Stranded during Covid-19 Pandemic: Nonetheless Timing is Everything

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“Blindness separates us from things but deafness separates us from people”

Helen Keller.

Hearing loss and need for hearing care services in the form of hearing aids, cochlear implants or others is growing each day globally. If these services are not provided, they may impact the quality of life not only of the individual, but the family and the society as well. During the pandemic Covid-19 era of lockdown, social distancing and stay at home policies, deaf are even more isolated; further raising the concern.

The cochlear implantation (CI) is usually an elective surgery. The non-essential elective surgeries have been postponed to provide adequate resources to Covid-19 affected patients. Some surgeries may be put on hold up to a definite period without compromising surgical outcome. However better outcome in speech and language development have been reported in congenitally deaf children who were implanted at an early age, so deferring CI may have lifelong impact on their hearing experience. In the present scenario of COVID-19 crisis, CI teams and parents of congenitally deaf children cannot go ahead in the ways, they were supposed to.

### Is it right decision to postpone CI?

Though early intervention is the key for better outcome of CI, but yes, it is fine to postpone the surgery, as to confirm the candidature for CI, a number of audiological, radiological, psychological and physical tests are required, which means (more exposure to diagnostic labs) chances of contracting virus and SARS CoV-2 infection may increase. Also, the postoperative follow ups and rehabilitation therapies are must for the success of CI.

### Impact on patients implanted early in 2020

The patients who were implanted during the early months of this year, their follow ups and speech therapies may have been affected during lockdown periods. Some patients were in the pro-

cess of planning CI, some cleared their candidature, affected in their own way.

As of now, no effective vaccine or proven treatment is there in today's scenario, it's tough to comment how this Covid-19 will further impact human life. We are hopeful that we will overcome this pandemic soon and will be back to our normal life. At this moment a careful and organised approach should be followed. The CI should not be planned at the cost of hospital resources i.e. doctors, nurses, paramedical staff or availability of PPEs, ICU beds during this global emergency. The safe surgeries should not be compromised at any level because of extra financial burden of COVID-19 protective measures. A wise man said “Timing is everything”..... Think wisely, Act wisely.

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