

New Type of Hearing Implant Surgery Performed on Children at Children's Memorial Hospital

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The Alpha 1 system consists of a magnetic implant surgically placed into the skull behind the ear and then an externally worn, sound processor that contains a battery and microphone attaches to the head via magnets. This two inch device is a member of a class of hearing implants that send sound energy through the bone directly to the inner ear, a mechanism referred to as "bone conduction".

"Clara is the first child, and therefore the youngest patient in Illinois to receive the Alpha 1," said Nancy Young, MD, Head, Section of Otolaryngology and Neurotology and Medical Director of Pediatric Audiology at Children's Memorial Hospital. "We are able to activate the device by fitting patients with the external sound processor in three to four weeks. This is a significant change from the other bone conduction implants that require a healing time of 3 to 6 months. More important for the child and family, the need for daily cleaning of the implant site is eliminated because this device does not come directly through the skin as do the Baha and Ponto implant systems. The Alpha 1 uses magnetic coupling of the implant and the externally worn process, a technology already in use in cochlear implant systems".

The Alpha 1 System received approval from the FDA in June of 2011 for use in children and adults 5 years of age and older. It is also FDA approved for children and adults with "single sided deafness" and mixed hearing loss. Single sided deafness refers to individuals with normal hearing in one ear and very significant sensorineural (inner ear and/or nerve hearing loss) in the opposite ear that cannot be helped by a traditional hearing aid. The Alpha 1 is placed behind the deaf ear. The sound coming toward the non-hearing ear is picked up by the microphone and transmitted through the bone of the skull to the normal hearing ear. "The result is improved hearing in daily life that may be of particular importance to children in a classroom setting. The Alpha 1 and other bone conduction devices provide hearing solutions to individuals who are not candidates for a cochlear implant or a hearing aid," said Young.

Treacher Collins syndrome is a condition that is passed down through families (hereditary) that leads to problems with the structure of the face. The outer part of the ears is abnormal or almost completely missing, and there is hearing loss.

Children's Memorial's Audiology Department is recognized as a center of excellence for diagnosis and management of infants and children with hearing loss of all types and degree. Our pediatric cochlear implant program for deaf children is one of the largest and most experienced in the world.

Children's Memorial is one of the top pediatric hospitals in the country according to USNews & World Report. In June of 2012, the hospital will be opening a new facility called Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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 Dr. Nancy Young

in downtown Chicago on the campus of its medical partner, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

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