

An Analysis of Referrals to The South of England Cochlear Implant Centre 2000-2005

Introduction

During the period 2000-2005 the South of England Cochlear Implant Centre (SOECIC) received 331 referrals for assessment for cochlear implantation. The candidates were referred from the South of England and the Channel Islands and ranged in age from 2 months to 87 years.

Demographics

Over a third of the referrals were from Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) within Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Six of the referrals came from homes where English was not the first language. The vast majority of the referrals to SOECIC were from a White ethnic background. 4% were from an Asian ethnic group (including Pakistani, Indian and Chinese). Only 1% were from a Black ethnic group. The 2001 Census for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight reports similar demographics.¹

Problems

Unfortunately after several tuning appointments three of the adults implanted during this time received little or no benefit. One had meningitis with extensive ossification, one had a neurological problem which was diagnosed after implantation. The third patient had a difficult insertion due to swelling in the scala tympani and scala vestibula, but reports some benefit after receiving a second implant. Six of the implants which initially worked well became device failures. Five were successfully re-implanted. Three of the patients implanted bilaterally following meningitis received split or double array implants. Two had standard arrays in the other ear and only use that device, the other has two double arrays and has limited benefit.

Timescale

Time taken from Referral to Implant during this period was averaging over a year. The quickest response was only 7 weeks for a child referred following meningitis. Some of the time was taken up waiting for funding to proceed with either the assessment or the operation. This delay affected mainly the adult patients. In the light of the new 18 week care pathway we are taking steps to improve the process and to persuade funding PCTs to approve funding more quickly. We hope that the period 2005 – 2010 will see a big change in the length of time a patient will have to wait for an implant.

Outcomes

187 patients (74 adults, 4 teens, 109 children) referred during this time have received a cochlear implant. Eleven patients from this group have now been implanted bilaterally, five were post meningitic and two were implanted simultaneously. eight of the eleven are using both devices. After at least one year of use 66% of the adults (n=71) score more than 90% on BKB sentences. 68% of children over the age of three with no significant special needs and at least 12 months experience (n=54) are able to complete the McCormick Automated Toy Test at <50 dB(A).

Discharges

Less than 60% of the referrals to SOECIC during the period 2000 - 2005 resulted in cochlear implantation. The referrals during 2005 were considered in more detail and of 62 referrals 27 were discharged prior to implant). Nineteen of these were outside the audiological criteria used at that time. Measures to ensure that all referrals are appropriate have included writing to referrers prior to the first appointment for further audiological information.



Summary

187 of the 331 patients referred between 2000 and 2005 received cochlear implant(s). Six implanted devices have since failed but five patients were re-implanted successfully. Unfortunately three patients do not get any benefit from their implants and are non-users. Six patients have transferred to other implant centres. Six patients have died. However 172 are still under the care of SOECIC and continue to benefit from the increase in access to sound afforded by their implant.

¹ www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001
accessed April 2008