



Cochlear Implant Center
**Westchester
 Medical Center**
 Westchester Medical Center Health Network

CochlearConnections

News from the Cochlear Implant Center | Summer 2022

Cochlear Implant Center

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The Cochlear Implant Center at Westchester Medical Center, flagship of the Westchester Medical Center Health Network (WMCHealth), provides coordinated audiology and speech-therapy services for cochlear implant patients and those considering this life-changing technology. It is the only center between New York City and Albany providing comprehensive services for children and adult patients.

The Cochlear Implant Center is staffed by a team of highly trained audiologists and speech pathologists with expertise in evaluation and rehabilitation services for individuals who are cochlear implant candidates and those who receive a cochlear implant. Cochlear implantation is a highly successful technology that allows deaf children to hear and speak, and enables deafened adults to enhance their lives. The Cochlear Implant Center provides comprehensive services such as individualized programming of the implant and speech-therapy services.

American Cochlear Implant Alliance

CI2022 DC Meeting

Our Cochlear Implant Center team traveled to Washington, DC for the American Cochlear Implant Alliance (ACIA) CI2022 DC meeting, the first live professional cochlear implant meeting in two years! We were excited to be at the meeting again with colleagues and also pleased to contribute to the scientific content of the meeting.



Michelle Albera delivered a platform presentation on group aural rehabilitation in the infant/toddler population. Dr. Schmelzer presented a poster on older adult group aural rehabilitation, and Dr. Bornstein presented a case study on cytomegalovirus (CMV) with progressive hearing loss.

The WMC Cochlear Implant Center is proud to be an ACIA Organizational Member. The ACIA is a not-for-profit organization created for the purpose of eliminating barriers to cochlear implantation. The ACIA sponsors research and actively advocates for improved access to cochlear implants for patients of all ages. Members include clinicians, scientists, and educators as well as patient and consumer advocates. Dr. Stidham and Dr. Morgan are also ACIA New York State Champions working with the ACIA to help effect policy changes at the state and national level to assist individuals with hearing loss. For more information about the ACIA, check out their website at acialliance.org.

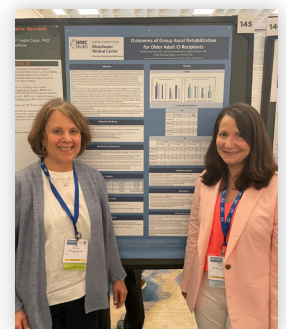
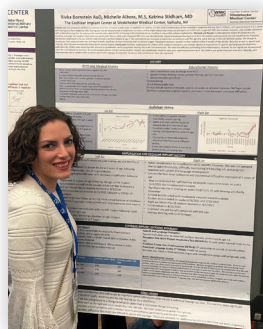


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What is Auditory Verbal Therapy (AVT)?

AVT is a family-centered approach for children with hearing loss to learn to listen and talk using hearing aids or a cochlear implant.

Who is an Auditory Verbal Therapist?

An Auditory Verbal Therapist can be a speech language pathologist, audiologist, or teacher of the deaf with special training and certification to become a listening and spoken language specialist.

Why AVT?

Auditory verbal therapy maximizes the use of hearing to develop language, cognitive, and literacy skills. Therapy sessions focus on coaching families to use auditory verbal strategies in their daily routines and to make listening a way of life.

Congratulations to our very own speech language pathologist, Michelle Albera, on receiving her AVT certification!



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Spotlight on Staff

Interview with Dr. Katrina R. Stidham



What is your favorite thing about being a cochlear implant surgeon?

As a surgeon, I can't deny that I do love operating. However, my favorite thing as a cochlear implant surgeon really is seeing my patients' progress long-term after their implants. There is nothing more rewarding than having a child that I implanted as a baby come to the office chattering about their day, or an adult that was previously struggling to communicate, conversing with ease. I am truly blessed to be in a profession that is so personally rewarding on a daily basis.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

I have 11-year-old twin girls. They are the center of my life outside of work. My husband and I try to spend as much time with our girls as we can, as we know we only have a few more years before they are off on their own. We are often engaged in outdoor family adventures or little excursions on the weekends, or just hanging out as a family. It sounds pretty unexciting, but I love it!

When meeting someone for the first time, what would you want them to know about you?

I am a somewhat shy introvert. Being a physician, I have had to work hard to be outgoing and engaging with new people that I meet every day. It is important for me to provide the best care for patients. However, I am in my comfort zone when I am working on my own, alone.

When did you know you wanted to be an otolaryngologist? Why?

I wanted to be a surgeon for as long as I can remember (probably since age 5), and I went to medical school with that plan. However, I didn't consider otolaryngology until I had rotated through the surgical sub-specialties. Otolaryngology is different from most surgical specialties in that the physician typically has long-term relationships with patients who have chronic ENT problems. I was really drawn to the concept of caring for my patients, not only in the operating room, but in the office as well and really getting to know my patients over time. Part of the joy, and sometimes the sorrow, of the day is following with my patients through their lives.

Go on and finish these sentences:

Have I told you that...

...I am always cold. It can be 78 degrees and I will be a little chilled and need a sweater. It drives my husband crazy, as we are often fighting over the thermostat at home. I always carry a jacket with me, just in case.

You know you're from _____ when you _____.

You know you're from the South when you scan the menu for grits every time. I was born and raised in Tennessee. The sign of a good breakfast place for me is one that has grits and biscuits and gravy. I have spent most of my adult years in California and New York, where grits are in short supply. If I see grits on the menu, I order it every time!



Patient Perspective: **Linda Pulver**

Linda is a 66-year-old woman who began to experience hearing loss in adulthood. We met Linda in June 2021, when she was first seen at our center after reporting significant hearing difficulty (despite utilizing appropriately fit hearing aids) and worsening tinnitus. On her initial cochlear implant (CI) evaluation that same month, Linda did not meet the criteria for classic or hybrid CI candidacy. However, after having further progression of hearing loss and increased difficulty with everyday conversation, she returned for re-evaluation nine months later. Upon meeting hybrid candidacy criteria in March 2022, Linda was approved for left cochlear implantation surgery. Linda received a cochlear implant at our center on April 26, 2022. Although she is early in the process, her passion for hearing and overall life is truly inspiring. Linda has been kind enough to share her impressions of her cochlear implant and her story of perseverance with us.

What made you decide to pursue cochlear implantation?

When talking with people, I started to notice that I missed a lot of what the other person was saying. My favorite phrase was, "What did you

say?" My wife and I would talk in the evening about the next day's events and usually in the morning I'd find out that we talked about something totally different and she would look at me like I was nuts!

Were you nervous about the surgery? Did you have high levels of pain following surgery?

I was very nervous about the surgery because I just didn't know what to expect. I knew I was in good hands with Dr. Stidham and her team. I was able to manage my pain with meds, and time.

How has cochlear implantation changed your life so far?

I can hear out of my left ear now! It's been a long time and I can hear the birds chirping now. Just getting used to sounds I haven't heard in a long time. Dr. Kristi turned on my implant for the first time and asked, "Can you hear me?" WOW, I can hear her talking to me.

What does speech sound like?

Very clear now. No more muffled sounds!



Can you listen to music?

Now I can! I always heard "thump thump" while traveling in my Jeep and I would ask my wife what it was. She would reply, "It's music!" Now I hear it and it's great!

What activities have you been able to resume since getting the cochlear implant?

I've been able to enjoy watching baseball on TV and hear what's happening, a lot more than I used to be able to hear. It's nice to have conversation with family and friends and whoever it may be. Just to talk and hear someone, it's been a long time!

HLAA Westchester/Rockland Walk4Hearing, May 2022

Our Cochlear Implant Center team and many of you joined us for the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) annual Walk4Hearing at FDR State Park in May. This was the first live event in three years and it was all around a delightful day to reconnect with friends, meet new people, and support the worthy cause of the HLAA. The WMC Cochlear Implant Center was a Gold Sponsor of the Walk and we were proud to be a part of this wonderful annual fundraiser event. We were particularly excited to see so many of our patients at the event!

Our team also raised \$3200 for the event, with 40% of those funds directed back to our center for patient support. We would like to give a special shout-out to the Neville family, who were the champions of our fundraising effort!

We look forward to joining you all in the Walk4Hearing again next year.



Places to Use Remote Microphone Technology with Cochlear Implants

Many people have remote microphones, but don't know where to use them.
Here are some ideas!



Lectures, comedy shows, meetings



Listening to music, podcasts,
or movies, especially while traveling



Playing sports or in exercise classes



Group conversations, meals,
and celebrations



On walks, runs, or while skiing
with friends



In the car, give the remote mic
to your partner, friend(s), or kid(s)