

Your questions – Day One

Stan Initial tuning happened about 4 or 5 weeks after the initial operation and mine took place here at Southampton. It was quite early in the morning. The first thing that happens when you see the audiologist, the processor gets connected up to you and the computer. It is not turned on as far as speech is concerned, it is purely there to get comfortable hearing - sound levels - by using a series of different beeps. Then once that is done, that is when the actual processor was turned on and you hope to hear some speech.

They do warn you that it might sound a bit strange and you might not hear very much. In fact they said to me, "If you get a couple of words, then you will be doing well". So full of anticipation I am waiting for it to be turned on and as soon as it was, it was absolutely amazing. I was completely blown away because I heard and could understand every single word that the audiologist said to me. Alright it sounds a little bit strange to start with, perhaps like Donald Duck or Mickey Mouse and "shh" at the end of words, but I would say over a period of a couple of day that disappeared and the speech that I was hearing began to become quite normal sounding.

Ian There was a month delay between the operation and switch on, and of course – that was an uncertain time. I was wondering had the implant been successfully inserted, would the electrodes work, had any been damaged during the operation, would I be unusual and find that for some reason my cochlea did not respond to the stimulation? So as my wife and I came down to Southampton, we were expectant, but of course we were concerned as well. It was an unusual but exciting time for us both.

I sat down with Nicci, my audiologist, at her computer screen and my wife just across the room and we started the process of tuning which involved Nicci stimulating the various electrodes in the cochlea, but starting at a low level and increasing them gently. I had to tell her was the sound very quiet, getting louder, pleasant, too loud, and once each electrode was set at what I indicated was pleasant she then said, "Well, we are going to switch on.", and that was the start of the switch on day.

Margaret The very first appointment I had I was really, really nervous. When the processor was first switched on everything was really quiet. Then the audiologist started to speak to me, and I could make out some sound, then she knocked with the pencil on the desk and I heard that perfectly. Then she started to speak again, and again I started to get several sounds.

I then went through to see Sarah and she was talking with me and I said to her, "I can hear something going tick, tick, tick" and she said, "That's the clock on the wall.", and that was the first time that I had been able to hear the clock.

Juliet When it was initially switched on the voices sounded very electronic and it was obvious that I had to relearn to identify all the environmental sounds that I was beginning to hear again. Naming and labelling those sounds that which were

just odd noises in the beginning.

Tayseer On the day of the switch on was quite emotional to be honest. I remember that the first time I heard sounds it sounded so weird and maybe something similar to birds singing or... you know - not what I expected. But I was told that it's going to get better, so all I needed to do was keep wearing the implant all day and going for walks, and just try to explore the sounds outside home. And it started to get better than I expected.

Janet When I had the switch on it was quite amazing. I knew that it was going to be sounding unreal, but I just wanted to hear something to know that all was well. The voices were like beeps beeping but it was growing – but it was all one tone, it didn't change at all. Then when my husband was speaking, he sounded exactly the same. I was pleased that it was going with the speech, it wasn't just like random noises. I could hear the speech sensation

Christine I came back for the initial tuning and I had been prepared not to expect to hear normally, but it was just a case of seeing what would happen. Everyone is different; some patients can hear the human voice straight away. In my case it was as I thought it probably would be, all I could hear at the initial switch on was just beeps but I didn't worry because I was reassured that this could happen.

Toni When I first had the device switched on it was "Wow!" - like a different world. I immediately heard sounds like I had never heard before, albeit very strange sounds. People's voices sounded like the Daleks or Donald Duck, I could hear the indicator clicking, which I hadn't heard for 30 years, and the clock ticking. I had to turn the cuckoo clock off! Otherwise, things were a bit strange to begin with until I had my next appointment.

Britt-Marie Well after the six weeks I went for my tuning in and my daughter came with me. She asked if she was allowed to film on her phone, they said 'yes' to that. After listening to a lot of beeping, the audiologist said, "Now we are going to see what you can hear", and I suddenly after all this silence heard a voice saying, "Can you hear me?" and it was so emotional. I said, "Did you just say 'can you hear me?'" and of course I started crying and so did my daughter and even the audiologist had tears in her eyes.

Brian Don't expect from the moment you are switched on or at your first tuning to go out into the world and converse with everybody, it is not quite that straightforward. You have to work at it, people helping you by reading to you, and saying back what they have told you. There are workshops here, they are all helpful. Listen to things, turn the radio on even if it sounds rubbish, gradually listen a bit longer and you will pick out more, and you will get the news. I can now comfortably watch television, or a news programme, or the weather forecast and it's great. It's the first time for probably 15 years or more I can now listen to the weather and the news and repeat back to anybody else what I have heard, it's tremendous.

You have just got to work. It doesn't just automatically work. They are there - the people at Southampton - they will give you all the back-up and support but do a bit on your home as well, with friends, anybody, neighbours.