

Will Hellier

Hello, I'm Will Hellier, and I am one of the cochlear implant surgeons here at the University of Southampton Auditory Implant Centre.

I first started doing cochlear implantation back in 1995 when I was training in London, and to help people who have lost their hearing hear, and to help children who have really never heard before hear for the first time was the most wonderful experience. Because of that, when I started in Southampton as a Consultant sixteen years ago, one of my aims was to join the Auditory Implant Centre and continue that work. I've been very fortunate to do so, and it has been a most wonderful experience.

When you come for your initial assessment, it is a question of you meeting me and me meeting you. What we want to find out is what's been happening over your life if you're an adult, or if you're a child, what's happened to date. We want to find out about your hearing history, or if you are a child, your lack of hearing history; and what's gone on so far.

I will be seeing you and asking you questions regarding all the hearing aspects, but also the more general medical questions that we ask everybody who we are thinking of consider a cochlear implant for. There are no threatening questions: it's all very straightforward, and you will be able to answer these questions easily. I'll examine you, and I'll want to look at your ears. We'll look at your hearing tests, and then we'll discuss exactly what's going on with you or your child, and what the options are. And I think with anybody, it's a question of discussing those options and what's best for the individual. We will discuss the surgery, what goes on, and we will discuss what comes next in terms of investigation and potentially treatment.

Cochlear implant surgery, like any surgery, has risks as well as benefits. The risks of surgery are small with cochlear implantation. The surgery takes 2 to 3 hours, and most patients can go home the next day. There can be some discomfort where the implant has been put in, and some people have a degree of slight dizziness for a short while afterwards. We do take the chance when you come to see us to talk all about the risks of surgery, and you will have a chance to ask and have answered any questions.

Once you've gone home you'll spend two weeks with some packing in your ear, and some little strips over the stitches behind the ear where the wound is. We will then see you two weeks later to take these little strips off and to take the dressing out of the ear. This usually

is very painless. There's a small stitch to take out, but they're not major stitches, and it's usually a very painless procedure.

I feel I've been very fortunate to work in the field of cochlear implantation and to help people hear again. I look forward to seeing you at the Auditory Implant Centre to discuss your hearing, and hopefully to see what we can do to help you hear again, or to hear better.