

COLOMBIA

Caregiver Name: Maria
Age at Implantation: 2

Child: Alejandro
Age Today: 16



As the mother of a cochlear implant user, the challenges we faced as a family emerged mainly during the initial stage. **Limited knowledge about healthcare procedures related to deaf people who use hearing devices sometimes made the journey more complex.** I believe that in Colombia, there is still a need for broader and more accessible guidelines—not only in terms of technology, but also in the understanding of terminology, policies, and available solutions. In addition, there is a lack of proper training for medical service personnel in healthcare centres, as well as a lack of awareness among doctors, surgeons, and ENT specialists. Some professionals work almost in isolation from the broader processes involved. This type of training and sensitization should be mandatory within the regulatory framework, to ensure that deaf people can achieve a good quality of life and shape their own life projects. This was Alejandro's initial expectation: whether his life could resemble that of most hearing people.

Taking ownership as a family, with full commitment, and becoming the axis that brought together an interdisciplinary team was essential. **The school, therapists, the implant brand, and especially families who had already walked this path became the oxygen that sustained and strengthened us day by day, both before and after the surgery.** Everything that followed—rehabilitation and school inclusion—began to make sense, and our son's response to the world filled us with joy.

If I must highlight the most meaningful support in our journey, beyond his father and brother, it was the families and their life stories. Their strength, their resilience, and their willingness to do everything possible—and even more—to help their children move forward has been truly invaluable.



Our son's greatest achievement has been allowing himself to be an active participant in building his own dreams. He knows what he likes, and even when his daily life demands greater effort, he trusts in his ability to move forward. He understands that life sometimes requires a higher level of self-discipline, and he commits to it fully. He is an athlete—a passionate and talented soccer player. And without even trying, he gives us hope and joy every day. He is a good human being; whenever he has the opportunity to help or encourage someone, he never hesitates. His motto is, *"Everything is going to be okay."*

The advice I would give to other parents is to open their minds to the infinite possibilities and joys they can build alongside their children. Do not compare your child to anyone else, as this can affect their motivation and confidence to learn and achieve

new goals. The true benchmark will always be the child themselves. Each one is unique and perfect, exactly as they came into our lives. They are a gift, and they teach us to become better human beings and stronger families.

Observe them with patience, time, and dedication from infancy. Learn from them and discover what they truly enjoy—this is a powerful tool to support their learning pace, language development, and ability to express themselves. Remember that they are not meant to be “like others”; they are meant to be “themselves.” Do not be afraid of not knowing. Ask questions, seek information, and stay close to—or build—your own support network. A strong support network is one of the most effective ways to stay connected to the world, as it provides emotional well-being, practical support, a sense of belonging, and resilience to face challenges, ultimately improving quality of life through affection, companionship, and stability.

To access cochlear implantation as a family, we went through several interviews and conversations with healthcare professionals, therapists, and educators. As we explored the benefits of the implant, we recognized the positive impact it would have not only on our child’s cognitive and communicative development, but also on his social growth and overall well-being. With this understanding, we decided to give him the opportunity to “hear the world.”