

GUATEMALA

Caregiver Names: Iván and Pamela

Age at Implantation: 2

Age Today: 5

Hello! We are the parents of a 5-year-old girl; a 42-year-old father and a 40-year-old mother, whose world changed completely in 2022. Since that year, we have been users of cochlear implants. Our daughter was born through normal delivery at a private hospital in the capital city, after a pregnancy without complications and with no medical history of hearing loss. She is the daughter of hearing parents. However, at 6 months of age, we noticed that something was not right with her learning and overall development; she did not babble, did not turn when called, and only said a few words. Unfortunately, this period coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic in our country, and due to government health restrictions, we had to delay both her care and diagnosis.

It was not until 2021 that she was diagnosed with severe bilateral hearing loss. She was immediately fitted with hearing aids to improve her condition, and we noticed some progress, although slow in her listening skills and vocabulary. One year after starting treatment with hearing aids, we were informed about the possibility of a cochlear implant. Determined to improve her condition and to be more than just a source of support, we wanted our daughter to begin developing independently and confidently. **Our greatest challenge was making the decision to accept the cochlear implant procedure for several reasons:** primarily, **fear of the unknown**, as it was a procedure we had never heard of before; the possible risks and complications; and the fact that our daughter was very young to undergo such a procedure. Secondly, there was the **financial challenge**. Although it is true that money can be earned and worked day by day to cover the costs, we cannot ignore the fact that we live in a developing country where the economic conditions of most of the population are limited and the cost of the procedure is significant.



With great faith and determination, we decided to proceed with the procedure, always counting on the support of a non-profit organization, and team of professionals who consistently provided help and information, making us feel supported throughout this entire stage of uncertainty. Thank God, the procedure was a complete success. **It is also important to mention the unconditional support of our family, without whom this would not have been possible.**

One month after the cochlear implant surgery, we truly felt the great change and witnessed the miracle that such a small processor could bring into our lives. A whole world of possibilities opened up for our daughter. Her vocabulary expanded from about 20 words to approximately 1,000 words in just a couple of months. Our family dynamic changed completely: before, we had to be constantly attentive to her, communicate with her through signs, and never leave her alone. Later, as we observed her listening abilities and saw her gradually become more independent and autonomous, we began to give her more freedom.

Today, she has achieved what we never imagined: she can hear like a hearing child, has age-appropriate vocabulary, attends a “regular” school, socializes with hearing children, takes ballet, English, and swimming classes without any problems, and performs any activity without restrictions. Nothing stops her!

Our advice to parents who are currently unsure about whether or not to proceed with a cochlear implant would be: DO IT!!! It is worth it! It is completely safe in expert hands, and the benefit it will bring to your children is invaluable. It is a decision that can change a child’s life and will surely help them develop in the best possible way, becoming independent human beings and contributing to the development of their country.

