

INDIA

Caregiver Name: Rashmi

Age at Implantation: 1 year

Age Today: 12 years

Our daughter is now 12 years old, but when she 14 months old, she received a bilateral cochlear implant. We found out about her hearing impairment when the newborn hearing test was done at the hospital she was born in. Of course it came as quite a shock to us as parents, but we both were ready to take on the situation. We started researching the best options for the future of our child. We sought advice from doctors and specialists as well as the internet, and it was then we came to learn about cochlear implants as a prosthetic for people with a hearing disability.

In India, we only knew of one doctor in Chennai as there wasn't much awareness on hearing when our child was born. The hospital she was born in was one of the best in the city, but they did not have a lot of information on how to handle our daughter's hearing loss and there were no parents support systems for such situations. However, by doing our own research and meeting with the right professionals, all of this worked out in the end.

Another challenge was the huge cost of the implants. We did not have access to any loans, government support, or insurance coverage for this situation and to manage these funds on our own was a huge financial burden for us. However, we were able to manage with financial support from family through personal loans.

Our greatest support has been our positive mindset, along with close collaboration with the cochlear implant team—especially our surgeon and speech therapist—which has served as a guiding force, alongside the continued support of our family. Family plays a very crucial role in supporting rehabilitation, as complete involvement of us as parents is essential.

A key point to emphasize is the importance of early detection and intervention, along with consistent rehabilitation in the years following surgery and regular follow-ups with an audiologist, all of which are essential for success.

Our proudest achievement is our daughter becoming an award-winning author of three books. She wrote her first best-selling book at age 10, and her next two works also received accolades in their genres. Our child is an example of hope and resilience for many parents on similar journeys to ours.

She goes to mainstream school and participates in all extra co-curricular activities and sports. She is also a swimmer. At one point, all of this seemed impossible, but with hard work and determination it became possible. As parents, we strive to advocate for cochlear implants, raise awareness, and support other families by serving as mentor parents to those navigating a similar journey.

Both of us played active roles in nurturing and empowering of our daughter. As the sole earner, her father ensured she had access to the best resources, while I, as her mother, took on the role of advocating for positive parenting and supporting families of children with cochlear implants by guiding those on a journey like ours.

In 2023, I began running online storytelling sessions for children with cochlear implants. These sessions aimed to help parents understand the critical role of storytelling in developing listening and language skills, in tandem with professional therapies. This initiative was inspired by my desire to share with other

parents what had greatly benefited my own daughter. Importantly, my intention was to help others, not for financial gain. In January 2026, I presented a research paper at an international conference in India titled “The Impact of Storytelling as a Tool for Children with Cochlear Implants Using Theatre Practices to Build Language and Auditory Skills – An Explorative Case Study.” We hope that parents’ belief in themselves and in their child, combined with a positive mindset and early intervention, can empower their children.