

COLOMBIA

Caregiver Names: Martha & Juan Carlos
Age at Implantation: 3

Child: Juanita Isabella
Age Today: 8

We are Martha and Juan Carlos, Juanita Isabella's parents. She is eight years old, and together with our older son, Juan Esteban, we are a Colombian family blessed by God through cochlear implantation.

At the age of three, Juanita Isabella received a cochlear implant in her left ear in Bogotá, Colombia. Prior to implantation, she had been using a hearing aid in her right ear since she was just under twelve months old.

Throughout our journey, we have faced and overcome multiple challenges. One of the earliest and most significant being the limited knowledge about cochlear implantation among some healthcare professionals in our city. Many were unfamiliar with this technology and lacked accurate, sufficient, or up-to-date information. On several occasions, we were advised against cochlear implantation, largely as a result of limited professional expertise surrounding it.



Fortunately, we were able to consult specialized otologists, audiologists, and auditory-verbal therapists with expertise in cochlear implantation. These professionals addressed our concerns in a respectful and evidence-based manner, helping us understand that cochlear implantation would enable our daughter to overcome her auditory limitations and develop spoken language.

This guidance allowed us to broaden our perspective and make an informed decision. We chose cochlear implantation, through which our daughter has developed age-appropriate spoken language comparable to that of her hearing peers. She has also demonstrated excellent academic performance and has not required curricular adaptations. For these reasons, we consider cochlear implantation to have been a significant blessing in our lives.

Our primary sources of support throughout this process have been, first, God, second, strong family cohesion, and third, an interdisciplinary medical and educational team of specialists who provided timely information and emotional support from the outset—an essential component of this journey.

Juanita Isabella has demonstrated remarkable resilience, completing five years of individualized auditory-verbal therapy with a Listening and Spoken Language Specialist Certified Auditory-Verbal Therapist. She has since been formally discharged and continues in an auditory-verbal follow-up program. **She has achieved fully age-appropriate spoken language development comparable to that of her hearing peers and attends a mainstream school within a traditional educational model. She does not require specialized educational support, as her auditory and language skills allow her to participate fully in the regular curriculum.**

Based on our experience, we advise other families to remain confident and not lose faith in God. Active parental involvement in a child's treatment process is essential, as it strengthens the child's sense of security, self-esteem, and confidence when facing developmental and social challenges. Equally important is the involvement of specialized professionals with extensive expertise in cochlear implantation, who can provide individualized, family-centered support. We strongly believe that the continuous training and education of healthcare and educational professionals in our country are critical to ensuring that families

receive timely, accurate, and clear information. In turn, this, facilitates early and appropriate access to cochlear implantation and helps prevent fear, misinformation, and uncertainty among families.

Finally, we would like to recognize the otologists, audiologists, and therapists who remain committed to ongoing professional development and stay at the forefront of advances in auditory technology. Through cochlear implantation, they have transformed the lives of countless children and families worldwide—our family being one such example. These specialists, too, have been a blessing from God in our lives.