

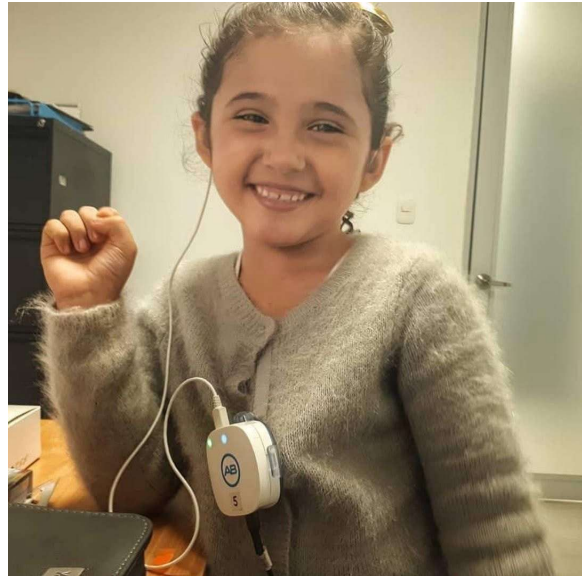
Colombia

Caregiver Name: Andrés
Age at Implantation: 4

Child: Samantha
Age Today: 13

This is our story from Colombia. When our daughter was diagnosed with hearing loss, our lives changed completely. **The biggest challenge was not just understanding the diagnosis but accepting that her path, and ours as a family, would be different from what we had imagined.** Fear, uncertainty, and many questions about her future, her education, and her communication in a world that is not always ready to include her all at once. The challenges did not end with the diagnosis or with the cochlear implant.

Samantha was implanted in 2017 when she was 4 years old, and although that was a fundamental step, we faced a very big difficulty: access to speech therapy and auditory rehabilitation. In our country, health insurance does not cover these therapies, and where we live there were no private options available on a consistent basis either.



For several years we received therapy intermittently, always privately, doing the best we could with the resources we had. However, it was not until 2021 that we were able to access consistent and structured therapy. That is when we understood how much continuity could make a difference in the rehabilitation process. That was a turning point in Samantha's development.

Our greatest support has always been ourselves, as parents. We decided to be truly present, not only emotionally but also with time, commitment, and dedication. In 2021 we made one of the most difficult and important decisions of our family life: Andrés decided to resign from his job as a police officer.

Our jobs consumed almost all of our time, and we realized that Samantha needed more from us, more presence and more support. I changed careers to dedicate the time she required, accompany her to her therapies, and be actively involved in her rehabilitation process. That sacrifice made a great difference in our daughter's life.

That same year we also started virtual therapy sessions, which allowed us to access specialized professionals who were not previously available to us. Consistency, family support, and commitment made Samantha begin to progress in a way we had not seen before.

Samantha's greatest achievement to this day is her ability to communicate, connect with others and carry herself with confidence. Seeing how she has developed her language, how she expresses her emotions, how she progresses at school, and how she interacts with other people is something that at one point seemed very far away. Every word, every step forward, and every small achievement is a great victory for our family. Beyond academics or speech, her greatest achievement is her confidence.

Samantha is now 13 years old; she knows who she is, she knows she is capable, and she understands that hearing loss does not define her limits. **To other parents who are beginning this journey, we would say, "Do not give up."** Trust your instincts, educate yourselves, demand your children's rights, and be present. Consistency, even when it seems difficult, changes everything. No effort is in vain when it comes to the well-being of our children.

In Colombia, access to cochlear implants and, above all, to post-implantation rehabilitation remains a great challenge. Sharing our story, talking about these realities, and making visible the barriers that families face is a way to raise awareness and open paths for others. Our journey continues, but it is full of hope. Samantha has taught us that hearing is not just about listening but about connecting, loving, and being resilient. And for that reason, despite everything, we are deeply grateful for this path we walk together.