

VIETNAM

Caregiver: Thanh Hương
Age at Implantation: 10

Child: Hong Anh
Age Today: 19

My daughter, Hong Anh, is a young girl with hearing loss. Looking back, our journey began when she was nearly two years old, when we first discovered her hearing impairment. Like many parents in similar situations, I was overwhelmed, frightened, and unsure of what the future would hold. However, we made an early decision that would later prove to be crucial: Hong Anh was fitted with hearing aids immediately after diagnosis.

At that time, I did not understand the importance of early intervention and was not properly instructed. Hong Anh started receiving intervention at around 3 years old, but it was not frequent. I still regret that she did not get the right early intervention method soon after her hearing impairment was identified.

For many years, Hong Anh used hearing aids and attended speech therapy, gradually developing listening and spoken language skills. However, when she was ten years old, her right ear experienced complete hearing loss. At that point, cochlear implantation became the only viable option to support her continued auditory and language development.

The decision to proceed with cochlear implantation was one of the most difficult for our family. In Vietnam, cochlear implantation is not covered by public health insurance, meaning that families must bear the full financial cost. This alone is a significant barrier for many parents. Yet **for us, the greatest challenge was not only financial, but also the emotional and medical impact.**

Hong Anh was born with a congenital allergic condition. As parents, we were deeply concerned that her body might reject the cochlear implant. The fear of possible complications, surgical risks, and long-term outcomes weighed heavily on our entire family. Reaching a consensus among family members required countless discussions, consultations, and moments of doubt. Ultimately, the question we asked ourselves was simple but profound: *What kind of future do we want for our child?*



My guiding motivation was always clear. I wanted my daughter to be able to hear and speak. To attend mainstream schools, and most importantly, to live independently as an adult. This vision helped me remain steady when doubts arose. I was fortunate to have friends who are professionals in audiology, rehabilitation, and education. Their expertise, honesty, and encouragement gave me the confidence to move forward.

Equally important was the strength I drew from the community of parents of children with hearing loss in Vietnam; a community that I founded in 2012 and continue to lead. Sharing experiences, fears, and hopes with other parents reminded me that we were not alone. This collective resilience became a powerful source of emotional support, not only for my family but also for many others walking similar paths.

Before making the final decision, we invested significant time in researching cochlear implant manufacturers, understanding the differences between electrode designs, and assessing suitability for Hong Anh's specific

condition. We worked closely with medical professionals to develop a clear auditory-verbal rehabilitation plan and realistic milestones to evaluate feasibility after implantation.

One principle I strongly believe in is respecting the child's voice. **I made sure Hong Anh was part of the decision-making process.** I explained the differences between hearing aids and cochlear implants in ways she could understand, answered her questions honestly, and even allowed her to choose the colour of her device. A small but meaningful choice that gave her a sense of ownership and confidence.



Now, after nearly ten years of implantation, Hong Anh is almost 20 years old and a first-year student at one of the most prestigious and competitive fine arts universities in Vietnam. **Her journey is not a story of "overcoming disability," but rather a testament to what is possible** when a child is loved, receives timely support, is included in the decision-making process, and has unwavering familial support.

Through my experience as both a mother and a community advocate, **my most important message to parents is this: *accompany your child*.** Be their partner and their friend. **Stay committed to your goals, whether short-term, mid-term, or long-term, and do not give up when progress feels slow.** Learn continuously, seek reliable information, and create opportunities for your child to engage in diverse experiences that support language development, social understanding, and self-confidence.

Cochlear implantation is not a miracle solution; it is a tool. Its success depends on informed decisions, consistent rehabilitation, and above all, the belief that children with hearing loss deserve every opportunity to participate fully in society. **When parents walk alongside their children with patience, knowledge, and hope, the path toward sound and independence becomes possible.**