

Panama

Caregiver Name: Karina
Age at Implantation: 3

Child: Kyan
Age Today: 7

The beginning of this journey was very difficult emotionally. Receiving the diagnosis meant facing, as a mother, a world full of technical words that I did not understand, creating fear and uncertainty. From one moment to the next, everything felt complex and overwhelming. **Understanding what that diagnosis really meant and how it would impact my son's life and our family was one of the first major challenges.**



The decision to move forward with a cochlear implant came with a lot of expectations. You hoped that the progress would be fast, almost immediate, but over time you learned that it doesn't work that way. The implant is not a magical solution, but the beginning of a long process that requires consistency, commitment and a lot of patience. **Learning to respect my son's own timing has also been one of the great challenges throughout this journey.** Another difficult aspect was the cost. Everything related to the implant, therapies and follow-up care is extremely expensive, and as parents you are constantly worried about how to cover everything without taking away what your child needs in order to move forward.

When we migrated to Panama, new challenges were added. The healthcare system changed and we had to continue therapy virtually for a period of time. In addition, something that may seem small but has a big impact on language development was adapting to a different everyday vocabulary. Words that are used one way in Colombia are said differently here. For a child who is developing language, an extra effort has to be made.

Throughout this journey, support has been essential. **The professionals and foundations that have accompanied us have made a huge difference.** Being in face-to-face therapy has been valuable, and the therapists are characterized by their empathy, patience and commitment to both the children and their families.

Emotional support within our family has also been crucial. I remember very clearly the day the implant was activated. It was a deeply emotional moment. I looked at my son's father and without needing words, we understood everything through our eyes. We hugged tightly and he said to me 'this is where everything begins'. That moment marked the true beginning of this process for us.

Today, my son's achievements are immense. **His language development, social interaction, school performance and independence are milestones we celebrate every day.** As a mother, there are moments that fill me with pride, such as when I speak to him in Spanish and he replies to me in English, showing that he can differentiate between languages and contexts. These achievements go far beyond hearing; they are about communicating, expression and being a part of his environment.

From our experience, I have tried to contribute by raising awareness and sharing our journey with other families. Talking about the importance of timely therapies, recommending foundations and guiding parents, especially those of newborns, about the importance of hearing screenings has been one way to help. **Hearing**

loss is not always visible when children are very young, but detecting it early can positively change the child's future. The journey has not been easy, but it has been full of learning, growth and hope.