

MAKING THE DECISION REGARDING COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this research report is my own independent work and has not been presented for any other degree at any other academic institution, or published in any other form. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Speech Pathology by Coursework and Research Report at the University of Witwaterstrand.

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Plagiarism declaration

I hereby declare that this research report was checked for plagiarism using the free online plagiarism detection tool software provided by the University of Witwatersrand under subject portals.

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ABSTRACT

The decision regarding cochlear implantation is complex and involves the consideration of a multitude of factors that will influence the future of a hearing impaired child. Parents are often faced with the task of making this decision urgently during a period when they are dealing with the diagnosis of a hearing loss. To date, there is sparse literature available on parental readiness for cochlear implantation. An understanding of parental experiences during the decision making process will help professionals involved in the cochlear implant teams to help parents through this difficult decision making time and hence have significant clinical implications for future practice. This is particularly relevant in South Africa where there is very little literature to guide both parents and professionals with regard to decision making. The objective of this study was to determine parental descriptions of their experiences with regard to the decision of cochlear implantation for their young children with hearing loss as well as the factors that needed to be considered by the parents for the child when deciding on a cochlear implant. Semi structured interviews were conducted with 13 parents at a Learning Facility in South Africa. The results revealed that the decision for cochlear implantation was based on two critical factors which were the sense of urgency and the future of the child. Other considerations such as the financial consideration, surgical risk, aesthetics, communicative outcomes, family consensus, and parental readiness were identified. The power of professionals during this time when decisions are being made in the context of ignorance and within an oral environment was revealed. This finding raised the question of the ethical and moral practice of professionals involved in cochlear implantation.

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