

## **Cochlear Implants: Parents' Choices and Perceptions**

Christiansen, J. B., & Leigh, I. W. (2002). *Cochlear Implants in Children: Ethics and Choices*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press. 360 pages. Hardcover. \$49.95.

*Cochlear Implants in Children* is a well-balanced and comprehensive book and is therefore a particularly valuable addition to the literature on this topic. The book provides detailed coverage of a major research project conducted by the authors as well as a series of discussions about the significance of the findings in relation to many of the crucial variables relating to the use of this technology with deaf children. An excellent and most readable introduction presents a history of the technological development and use of implants, written in association with Patricia Spencer and Jay Lucker.

Subsequent chapters present research data from a national survey of over 1,800 parents of children who had received implants in the United States up to 1999. Although the authors acknowledge that there may be some bias due to the proportion of nonreturn of survey instruments (there was a 24% response rate achieved), they nonetheless present these quantitative data and associated parent interview data in a manner that is clear, elaborate, and well structured. The chapters reporting this U.S. study (there are also some Australian features included in the study) cover implantation from preimplant issues through parents' overall satisfaction levels more than 12 months after the implantation process. Issues of ethics, decision making, considerations of the communication and education options available to parents, and future communication options for the child are included. The joint focus on the perspectives of parents and education is a particular contribution by this text in a field where the audiological, medical, phonological, and speech perceptual dimensions are so regularly canvassed and educational outcomes less frequently reported.

The authors also delve into the debates regarding the relative effectiveness of cochlear implants, their

potential influences on family dynamics, and the various forms of symbolism and hope that implants can produce for parents and for the medical, Deaf, and lay communities. As indicated, the book presents a balanced and comprehensive discussion of these and other issues and leaves readers better informed and able to make their own judgments. It is a nice balance between the reporting of original research and a most readable set of conclusions and future directions. As the authors point out, the final arbiters of the effectiveness of cochlear implants in education and other contexts will be the students themselves.

As one who is currently conducting research in this field, I highly recommend this book for teachers, parents, and others.

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