

Clinical *Connect*

Research, program news and referral updates from Hearing Implants Australia

Welcome to the first issue of *Clinical Connect*.

This bi-monthly update is for the GPs, ENT surgeons audiologists and allied health professionals who refer to and work alongside Hearing Implants Australia. Our program now supports more than 600 cochlear implant recipients across NSW, with a team that has grown organically to support the growing patient caseload. That growth reflects the strength of our referral partnerships, and we're grateful for them.

In each issue we'll share research news, program updates and practical referral reminders. If there's a topic you'd like us to cover, or you'd be interested in presenting at one of our education events, we'd love to hear from you.

Dina Mavris

Director of Audiology, Research & Relationships

IN THIS ISSUE

- Research update
- Closer-to-home care for the Central West
- Who to refer for an implant assessment
- Hearing evaluation reminders
- Upcoming professional development



RESEARCH

Research *update*

Our research partnership with Macquarie University continues to grow, including supervised Master's research projects and grant applications.

- **Grant Applications:** Cochlear Implantation and inner ear preservation: a multi-factor prospective study of surgical insertion parameters, electrode array selection, and combined auditory and vestibular outcomes.
- **Conferences:** Our team is preparing several abstracts for the Audiology Australia 2027 conference in Brisbane (11–14 May), including work on second-side implant decision-making, our multidisciplinary shared decision-making model, and counselling candidates who are hesitant about surgery.

GET INVOLVED

Interested in collaborating or have patients who may suit a study? Contact audiology@hearingimplantsaustralia.com.au or request further information from dina@hearingimplantsaustralia.com.au

Closer-to-home care for *the Central West & Central Coast*

Bringing implant surgery *closer to home*

Patients shouldn't have to travel to Sydney for cochlear implant surgery. To support equitable care across NSW, we're advocating for public surgical pathways at:

- **Orange and Bathurst**, alongside Dr Aydin Mohammadi
- **Dubbo and Gosford**, alongside Dr Ranga Sirigiri

With regular regional clinics, telehealth and Remote Assist, patients anywhere in NSW can already receive much of their implant care close to home.

SUPPORT OUR APPLICATIONS: Medical practitioners who would like to support these applications are welcome to contact us directly

WHEN TO REFER

Who might benefit from an *implant assessment*?

Many adults who could benefit from an implant are never referred, often because they're managing with hearing aids that no longer do the job. If in doubt, refer. Assessment is the only way to know.

Cochlear implant

- Struggles to follow conversation despite well-fitted hearing aids
- Poor word recognition. The 60/60 guideline (PTA ≥ 60 dB HL, word recognition $\leq 60\%$) is a useful trigger
- Heavy reliance on lipreading, or avoids the phone
- Single-sided deafness or marked asymmetry
- Unilateral recipients struggling in noise (second-side candidacy)

Bone conduction

- Conductive or mixed loss where hearing aids aren't suitable
- Chronic ear discharge, canal atresia or stenosis

Vestibular assessment

- Persistent dizziness, imbalance or falls
- Pre- and post-implant balance concerns

EVIDENCE UPDATE: GUIDELINES KEEP EVOLVING

Referral criteria change as the evidence grows. The widely used 60/60 guideline was developed in the US. A 2026 Australian study (Sucher, Fraser, Zwolan & Eikelboom, *International Journal of Audiology*) reviewed it against Australian audiometric practice in 1,141 adults and proposes a **60/70 rule**: refer if either ear has a three-frequency PTA (0.5, 1, 2 kHz) ≥ 60 dB HL **and** an unaided phoneme score $\leq 70\%$. An unaided phoneme score $\leq 60\%$ on its own also performed well. Evidence-based practice means our referral habits should keep pace with the research. Treat any guideline as a prompt to refer, not a ceiling. If in doubt, refer.

WHY EARLY MATTERS

Duration of deafness is one of the strongest predictors of implant outcomes. There is no upper age limit.

REMINDER

Keep hearing *on the agenda*

- **GPs:** ask about hearing in routine health assessments for older patients.
- **Audiologists:** repeat aided speech testing at reviews. Declining scores are a referral trigger.
- **ENTs:** consider implant candidacy for patients with progressive or sudden loss.

MEET THE TEAM

Team *updates*

Both our audiological and surgical teams have expanded and evolved. Say hello to a few familiar faces and a few new ones. We most recently welcomed senior audiologist Brooke Rose to our team. We welcome her and her 17 years of experience, as she brings with her a wealth of knowledge.

Our surgeons



A/ Prof Phillip Chang
ENT Surgeon



Dr Ranga Sirigiri
ENT Surgeon



Dr Hannah North
ENT Surgeon



Dr Rhydian Harris
ENT Surgeon



Dr Ekrem Serefli
ENT Surgeon



Dr June Huang
ENT Surgeon



Dr Aydin Mohammadi
ENT Surgeon



Dr Santiago Draghi
ENT Surgeon

Our audiologists



Dina Mavris
Director of Audiology, Research
& Relationships



Yashaswini Shivegowda
Audiologist



Jasmine Mashchenko
Audiologist



Krystina Vlachoulis
Audiologist



Brooke Rose
Audiologist



Mona Zabeti
Audiologist

WORKING TOGETHER

Referral isn't *goodbye*

We work alongside referring audiologists, not instead of them. Many recipients keep seeing their own audiologist for hearing aid care in the other ear, and we keep you updated from assessment through surgery and switch-on.

Upcoming *education events*

We partner with implant manufacturers and health providers to upskill clinicians across NSW. We also run quarterly in-person events at St Vincent's Clinic in Darlinghurst to discuss complex implant and vestibular cases. At these events there are also manufacturer updates on new technologies and advancements.

In addition to our in-person quarterly breakfast meetings, we run an online bi-monthly multi-disciplinary meeting, allowing for the gathering of professionals to discuss and work through complex patient care, rehabilitation and medical decision making around implantation.

If you would like further details, information or to attend one of the below sessions, please reach out to dina@hearingimplantsaustralia.com.au

Date	Event	Format
7 October 2026 6:00pm-7:00pm	Multidisciplinary Team Meeting – hosted by Jasmine Mashchenko & Dr June Huang	Online
16 November 2026 7:00am-8:00am	Cochlear Implant Breakfast Meeting – hosted by Krystina Vlachoulis; sponsored by Cochlear	In person – St Vincent's Clinic Level 4 Conference Room
2 December 2026 6:00pm-7:00pm	Multidisciplinary Team Meeting – hosted by Brooke Rose & Dr Rhydian Harris	Online

OUR LOCATIONS

Where *we are*

We see patients across Sydney and regional NSW, with remote care to fill the gaps in between. Note your patient's preferred location on the referral and we'll book them into their nearest clinic.

Sydney metro

- St Vincent's Clinic Darlinghurst
- St George Private Kogarah
- The George Centre Campbelltown
- Norwest Medical Suites
- Westmead Private Hospital

Regional NSW

- Newcastle · Gosford
- Wollongong · Nowra
- Bathurst · Orange · Dubbo
- Tamworth · Port Macquarie
- Wagga Wagga

Wherever you are

- Telehealth appointments
- Remote Assist device checks and adjustments
- Loan processors and parts by express post

Making a *referral*

Send a referral letter with a recent audiogram, aided speech results if available, and relevant history to audiology@hearingimplantsaustralia.com.au

You're receiving this as a referring or partner clinician of Hearing Implants Australia.