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Bridging Lived Experience and Clinical Practice: A Panel of DHH Professionals, in partnership with ACI Alliance

Moderated by Elaine Smolen, PhD,
CED, LSLS Cert. AVEd



AMERICAN COCHLEAR IMPLANT ALLIANCE

Research. Advocacy. Awareness.

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- The applicability and accuracy of the course content may vary by the clinical, geographical, and cultural context; you should evaluate the course accordingly.
- As healthcare is rapidly evolving, new findings may change the validity of the information presented in this course. Providers should always consult the latest research and guidelines from professional associations.
- The interventions discussed in this course may be limited in generalizability, requiring practitioners to consider specific individual and population factors.
- The course may not cover all possible risk factors, diagnostic methods, or treatment options, and complex cases may require additional considerations.
- Healthcare providers should apply cultural competence and sensitivity to ensure effective and respectful care based on their patients' diverse needs.
- Providers should always evaluate the limitations of diagnostic and screening tools, considering their potential for false results as well as any ethical implications.
- It is the responsibility of course participants to critically evaluate the evidence from multiple sources to guide professional practice.

Learning Outcomes

After this course, participants will be able to:

- Discuss the role of shared experience in patient-professional relationships when both parties have hearing loss.
- Identify at least three logistical challenges and solutions identified by DHH professionals in hearing healthcare and education settings.
- Describe systemic barriers to accessibility for DHH professionals in their workplace and discuss strategies to mitigate these barriers.



Guiding Today's Conversation

Elaine Smolen, PhD, CED, LSLS Cert. AVEd

Moderator



Assistant Professor of Teaching, Teachers College,
Columbia University

Teacher of the Deaf and Listening & Spoken Language
Specialist; researches language, literacy, and parent
support for young DHH children; hard of hearing and
uses bilateral hearing aids.

Perspectives Across the Cochlear Implant Care Continuum

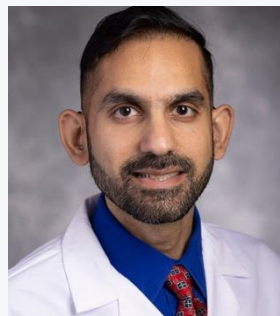


Michael Hoffman, PhD

Pediatric Psychologist

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia • University of Pennsylvania

Provides integrated psychological care for DHH children and families and serves on the cochlear implant team; developed a tiered behavioral-health model; deaf and uses a cochlear implant plus hearing aid.



Viral Tejani, AuD, PhD

Researcher / Cochlear Implant Audiologist

University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center • Case Western Reserve University

CI program subdivision leader, clinician, researcher, and associate professor; congenital hearing loss and uses bilateral hearing aids.



James R. Dornhoffer, MD

Neurotologist

Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota

Clinician-researcher focused on cochlear implantation, holistic care, auditory training, programming efficiency, unique disease, and quality of life; has bilateral hearing loss.

Clinical Care, Communication, Education, and Lived Experience



Jessica Hoffman, AuD

Clinical / Cochlear Implant Audiologist

Westchester Cochlear Implant Program • Westchester Medical Center • Phelps Hospital

Provides comprehensive pediatric and adult audiologic and CI care; born profoundly deaf, uses bilateral cochlear implants, and is fluent in ASL; accessibility advocate and presenter.



Caroline Ruocco, MS, CCC-SLP

Speech-Language Pathologist

Weill Cornell Medicine Cochlear Implant Team

Works with pediatric and adult patients using amplification and listening/spoken language; pursuing a clinical doctorate; has hearing loss and uses bilateral hearing aids.



Jacquelyn Briggs, MA

Teacher of the Deaf / Music Educator

Sound Start Babies, Mountain Lakes, New Jersey

Early-intervention provider using family-centered coaching; created a music curriculum for deaf education; has single-sided deafness and uses a unilateral cochlear implant.

The American Cochlear Implant Alliance (ACI Alliance) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating barriers to cochlear implantation through advocacy, research support, and education for professionals, patients, and families. You can learn more about our work at www.acialliance.org.

The Professionals with Hearing Loss SIG fosters community, promotes awareness and representation, advances access, and supports research and education related to the inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing professionals in the field of cochlear implantation.



Our conversation

1. Shared experience → trust & connection
2. Practical & clinical challenges
3. Accessibility & systemic recommendations
4. Representation → clinical excellence
5. Survey preview + audience Q&A

Building Trust & Connection through Shared Experience



How has your own experience with hearing loss or hearing technology shaped how you build rapport with patients and families — and made you a stronger clinician, educator, or therapist?

Voices: JACKIE • MIKE • JESSICA

Can you share a moment when disclosing your hearing loss changed the dynamic with a patient or family?

Voices: JIM • MIKE

What has been your hardest professional obstacle tied to your own hearing loss, and how did you address it?

Voices: CAROLINE • JESSICA

Practical & Clinical Challenges



What are the day-to-day logistical challenges in your role? What workarounds or accommodations have you developed — personally or with your employer?

Voices: VIRAL • JIM • JESSICA • JACKIE



Accessibility as a Systems Issue



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**What changes would make your workplace more accessible to DHH professionals?
What would you tell an institution trying to become more inclusive of DHH staff?**

Voices: CAROLINE • JESSICA



What barriers exist in training, licensing, or credentialing? What could preceptors or mentors have done to better support you during training?

Voices: JIM • JESSICA

Why Representation Matters for Clinical Excellence



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How can DHH (and other) representation change patients' perspective of outcomes or clinical excellence?

Voices: CAROLINE • VIRAL



What strengths do deaf and hard of hearing professionals bring to multidisciplinary teams that may not always be recognized?

Voices: JACKIE • MIKE

What is gained when the hearing healthcare workforce has strong DHH representation?

Voices: JIM • VIRAL • MIKE

WE ARE LOOKING FOR

DEAF & HARD OF HEARING (DHH) COMMUNITY MEMBERS & PARENTS OF DHH CHILDREN

**Have you ever had a healthcare provider who was DHH?
Would you be interested in having a provider who is DHH?**

We want to hear about your experiences and preferences!

About This Survey:

We are conducting a research study to learn more about experiences in hearing health care.

We want to hear about:

- Your experiences receiving pediatric or adult hearing healthcare
- How providers communicate and include you in care decisions
- Experiences receiving care from DHH professionals and how these compare to care from typically hearing providers

Your input will help us understand how to make hearing care more inclusive, responsive, and effective for DHH adults, children, and families. All experiences and perspectives are valued and welcome.

Your responses are completely confidential & will be used for research purposes only.

Survey Length: 15 minutes

Who Can Participate: DHH adults and
parents/caregivers of DHH children

Participation: Voluntary and anonymous

Questions or Need Assistance?

Contact Elaine Smolen at
es3519@tc.columbia.edu

TAKE THE SURVEY ONLINE:
[HTTPS://BIT.LY/DHHPROVIDERS](https://bit.ly/DHHPROVIDERS)



Audience Q&A

- What questions do you have?

Join Us!

We are thrilled to share that CI2027 San Diego — Conference on Cochlear Implants is coming up May 12–15, 2027, in San Diego, CA! This is the premier event for professionals dedicated to advancing the science and care of cochlear implants, featuring expert-led sessions, the latest research and innovations, poster sessions, workshops, and rich networking opportunities. Full conference details, registration, and updated information are available at ci2027sandiego.org.



Thank you!

Connect with the ACI Alliance:

<https://www.acialliance.org/>

Connect with our SIG:

Viral.Tejani@uhhospitals.org

es3519@tc.columbia.edu



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