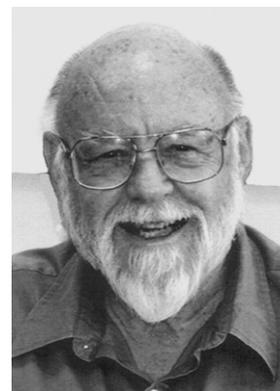


Editorial

When You Want to Feel Good...



Whenever I begin to feel depressed about the glacial pace of change in some quarters of our profession, I turn to the literature on cochlear implants. I am always amazed by the technological advances in this arena, and by our ability to apply them to the daily lives of cochlear implant users. It has been less than 25 years since the cochlear implant team at the University of Iowa implanted and evaluated the first Nucleus-22 instrument in the United States. In those days it was considered a major success if you could show that the implant improved lip-reading ability. Understanding of closed-set word lists was possible in the auditory-only mode, with generous contextual hints, but open-set word understanding was typically poor to nonexistent. Today, however, it is not unusual to encounter users who can carry out lengthy conversations without visual cues of any kind.

In this issue of *JAAA*, authors Todd Ricketts, D. Wesley Grantham, Patrick D'Haese, Jason Edwards, and Amy Barco, of the Bill Wilkerson Center at Vanderbilt University, contribute interesting pilot data on yet another giant step forward in cochlear implant rewards. In order to study the effects of speech processor placement and compression effects on sound sensitivity and interaural level difference, they tested localization ability in seven bilateral implant users. Quite aside from the interesting implications for placement and the use of front-end compression, the results show that some bilateral users can, under the right conditions, take advantage of interaural level differences to localize noise bursts quite well: indeed, in three of the seven users, average localization error was less than 20 degrees.

We have come a long way from the early, conservative days when you only implanted the poorer ear, because the hearing in the better ear (such as it was) had to be preserved at any cost. Now bilateral implantation is common, and we are seeing the fruits in the arena of sound localization, an ability few ever expected the implant user to regain when all this began not so very long ago.

James Jerger
Editor-in-Chief