

Karen Dempsey

Implant: Nucleus® 24

Speech processor: SPrint, upgraded to ESPrit BTE in May 2000, upgraded to ESPrit™ 3G in November 2002

Received CI: October 1998

Lives: Newcastle, NSW, Australia



Seven years ago technology changed my life when I received a Nucleus 24 Cochlear Implant. It allowed me to hear sounds and voices I had not heard for 30 years and introduced me to many new ones that had always been there but I did not know existed. Some sounds are just wonderful and amazing but there are also ones I could really do without and I'm sure other implant recipients can relate to that! Technology changes rapidly and I'm amazed at just how quickly advances are made. Thankfully we are able to upgrade our speech processors to take advantage of the changes.

My first processor was a SPrint body worn processor with SPEAK strategy with 250Hz Electrical Frequency Pulse Rate with a stimulation rate of 2,000 pulses per second. I was happy with the SPrint processor and heard reasonably well but still had difficulties with the telephone and by the time I connected up all the equipment to use the phone the person on the other end had usually given up on me. Additionally I still had to rely on my lip-reading skills in many situations.

I upgraded to an ESPrit behind the ear processor in May 2000. It was absolute bliss to get rid of those cords and to finally be able to wear a dress again. Due to the power limitation of the ESPrit I was still using the SPEAK strategy. Telephone conversations were still difficult and noisy or crowded areas were often avoided.

Then the ESPrit 3G was launched and I began hearing about all these wonderful new advances such as the inbuilt telecoil and the Whisper Setting™ and wow – coloured battery covers – a fashion statement! I received my 3G in November 2002 and started with the ACE speech strategy but at the slow rate of 250Hz to allow me to get used to ACE. Over a period of time my electrical frequency pulse rate was upgraded from 250 to 720 and my current rate is 900Hz with a stimulation rate of 10,800 pulses per second.

The difference has just been incredible for me, the benefits were huge, a big improvement in clarity, conversations are so much better and with a quick flick of a switch to the in-built telecoil I can use the telephone with ease, something that means a lot to me as my mother and brother live in Broken Hill and before my 3G I had not spoken to them on the phone for over 30 years.

I no longer have to be the first person in the room at meetings to get a front row seat as the Whisper Setting allows me to hear the speaker from any part of the room, I can manage better in noisy areas, I can hear music much better and I can even understand our family parrot's words. And of course being female I just love being able to colour co-ordinate my battery cover with my outfits.

I have heard people say they delay having an implant as they are waiting for improvements, but why wait and miss out on all those years of hearing. Cochlear has a lifetime commitment to their recipients. As their technology advances, upgrades to speech processors are made available, and for me each upgrade has just become better.