

It's Never Too Late for Better Hearing

A Past, Present and Future Hearing Loss Success Story

Brenda Battat worked in the field of hearing loss for 30 years, including several in leadership positions with the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA). She's lived with bilateral, genetic hearing loss since she was 19 years old. Brenda received her first cochlear implant (CI) 20 years ago in 2004, which opened her world to new sounds and experiences.

She was able to function well with one hearing aid in the other ear, until recently when she noticed deterioration and distortion in that ear, too. Testing showed that her speech discrimination was only four percent with the hearing aid. Her doctor suggested another CI, but Brenda was concerned about the effects of general anesthesia at the age of 82.

In May of 2024, Brenda received her second CI under sedation and local anesthesia, and now she's sharing her experience to inspire others.

In Brenda's Words:

It was fascinating to be awake for 75% of the surgery and to be able to let the surgeon know when I felt dizzy, and when I heard the sounds as the electrode array was inserted and activated.

A year later, I am glad that I made this decision. I hear better in noise, I definitely locate sounds much better, and apart from some disequilibrium for a week post-op, my balance is about the same as before the surgery. My recovery was much easier than the first time.

Hearing loss is a journey and along the way, you need to respond to changes as they occur. Now I want to spread the word about the new surgical approaches that were available to me when considering a second CI surgery two decades after my first. There are many new advances, including robotic assisted surgeries and local anesthesia options, to consider. Perhaps it will encourage more people to take the plunge to get their first or second implant—even in the eighth or ninth decade of life.



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Brenda Battat retired as executive director of HLAA in 2013. She has served on many advisory boards including the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NAEM) Consensus Committee on Affordable and Accessible Health Care. She can be reached at bebattat@gmail.com.