

**Cochlear case study - Danny Clarke**

**From rescued to rescuer**

Working in a helicopter and rescuing people from road accidents or off stricken ships, or searching for missing persons is not a job for the faint hearted, let alone someone who is profoundly deaf. For South Australia’s Danny Clarke, that’s just part of his day-to-day job.

Born with normal hearing, at the age of 8, Danny lost partial hearing in his right ear due to a fall.

And at the age of 24 he suffered a double tragedy when his right ear suddenly deteriorated overnight resulting in total one sided deafness, followed by hearing loss in his left ear after being ‘coward punched’ by a stranger in Freemantle, Western Australia.

For four months he was completely deaf, during which time he underwent a battery of specialists’ appointments and testing. Danny’s surgeon, Winthrop Professor Marcus Atlas from Ear Science Institute Australia, determined that Danny would be a suitable candidate for a Cochlear™ Implant, and in 2006 Danny became Western Australia’s first simultaneous bilateral Cochlear Implant recipient.

The operation was a resounding success and two years after his operation, Danny was back working as an EMS/SAR Aircrewman (Emergency Medical Service/Search & Rescue). Considering the demands of such a pressured, vital safety role with no room for error, Danny has done remarkably well to adjust.

“I transferred my care to the South Australian Cochlear Implant Centre (SACIC) in 2007 and moved permanently to South Australia in 2011 for work. The team at SACIC and my colleagues have been fantastic with helping me to operate effectively in my job,” says Danny. “My SACIC audiologists work closely with me to find solutions to optimise my hearing at work. For example, they fine-tuned my sound processors so I could tune them into the helicopter communication system in my flight helmet, allowing me to communicate effectively with the pilot and my other team members.

“Now I’ve upgraded to the Cochlear Nucleus® 6 I can use the Mini Microphone\* to connect wirelessly to the audio. I also use the Mini Mic for watching TV and listening to music on my phone, which is great.”

Since returning to work, Danny has been working in Emergency Medical Service which requires him to assist the captain from the cockpit in navigation, communication, emergency procedures and mission coordination.

He also has a part time job as a Helicopter Underwater Escape Training (HUET) instructor, training people who need to regularly travel in helicopters, how to escape in case of emergency. This includes oil rig workers, medical personnel and law enforcement officers.

Much of the teaching is undertaken in a dive pool where a cage simulates a helicopter flipping over, potentially trapping its passengers. The students are trained in emergency breathing apparatus, how to orientate themselves to an exit and underwater survival and escape – not exactly a job for the timid!

While submerged in water, Danny uses the Cochlear™ Nucleus® Aqua+ accessory to protect his sound processors. The Aqua+ is a soft, flexible silicone sleeve that fits over CP810 or CP900 series processors.

“The types of rescues we undertake are challenging in their own ways; lots can go wrong, especially winching survivors off the side of a cliff,” says Danny. “Our job includes winching people out of the ocean and out of forests, transporting patients away from road accidents and lots of hospital transfer retrievals. I certainly never get bored!”

In a helicopter, there is lots of ambient noise, from the swooshing rotors and screaming engines, to the crackling radio and lots of different voices. It’s a challenging job, but Danny loves it and he knows that there’s no way he could have continued to follow his passion without his Cochlear Implants and supportive work places.

***Favourite sounds***

Having experienced hearing loss, Danny has come to appreciate the full spectrum of sound.

Among his favourite sounds are the sounds of nature, such as birds singing, rain falling and leaves rustling in the breeze. But his all-time favourite sound is his daughter’s voice and laughter.

“My implants have allowed me to maintain strong relationships with my family and friends and to continue my rewarding job which affects people’s lives in a very positive way. I went from the rescued to the rescuer and I am forever grateful for that,” says Danny.

“I only had four months of silence, but during that period, I was scared, lonely and frustrated at not being able to hear. I am lucky to live at a time where this amazing technology exists and that allows you to reconnect to the world of sound. On a separate note, I can turn my implants off for an undisturbed sleep, or turn one up and one down to hear on the phone when there is background noise - so that’s always handy.”

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***\*Cochlear****™* ***Wireless Mini Microphone***

Gives customers the freedom to hear clearly no matter where they are - from lecture halls and classrooms to one-on-one conversations, they can use the portable wireless clip-on microphone to transmit speech and sound directly to their sound processor.

* Helps people hear and communicate in noisy environments.
* Use it as a portable streamer for watching TV or streaming music from an iPod.