

## Pulling the Cochlear Implant Industry Apart

Recently one of the major players in the cochlear implant industry –Cochlear –rebranded itself to satisfy its shareholders, and in doing so appointed a new CEO. Satisfying shareholders is about convincing them you are going to make money. Here's some key statements, followed by a critical eye.

[The new CEO of Cochlear] *"Dr Roberts will receive a remuneration package worth \$661,000, including a base salary of \$650,000. He will also receive short and long-term incentives."*

In sterling, he's going to earn £278,726.28 per year. With a salary like that, plus additional incentives and no Deaf background then who really cares about ethics? As long as he's got his flash car, house and good retirement pension ....

The mainstream won't challenge the ethics around this, because they think the sun shines out of their rear end. Cochlear are making the world go around, and they're fixing people aren't they?

Moving onto Cochlear's vision: *"The main competitor is ignorance," he said. " In the US there are 50,000 implants, I want to take that to 100,000 and 500,000."*

That is ultimately aiming for 1000% increase in cochlear implantation by Cochlear. That's scary, and to achieve such targets, aggressive marketing will be needed.

This is nothing but being about profit (it is a business), ONE share is worth \$29 alone. We are talking big business here, 800,000 shares according to the articles as a drop in the ocean.

One of the things he has to achieve to satisfy shareholders is:

*"Hurdles include earnings per share growing at a compound average growth rate of 20 per cent over three years and total shareholder return in the top quartile of the sharemarket's top 100 companies."*

I would challenge our charities and medical establishments. Balanced information, and what is the best interests of the Deaf child (its paramount, and it comes before anything - including parents). How can information be balanced if you just take information from a multi million £££ industry coming out with information in the interests of promoting their own profit margin, alongside the medical establishments and weigh this against the relatively little information is available in the Deaf community? Do you call that balanced information and being in the best interests of the child? I don't. Its maintaining the interests of the status quo, burying your head in the sand and pretending to dress it up as something else.

The other side of the coin i.e. people protesting against this growth is controlled by: a) lack of resources (Deaf people challenge things for free), b) deaf organisations who gag Deaf people out there from saying anything - Deaf 'professionals' are controlled on more than one level (those people who work for deaf organisations: how many times have you said 'I cant say anything cos I work for x organisation' or you are too scared to do so?), c) not being in a position to reach out as medical establishments do.

What about deaf adults when they enter the medical system. Do they get swung by health care professionals who've been taken to dinner / got a free conference flight / free gadgets from the company/drugs rep (and in this case, it could be Cochlear). Which is how things work in the medical world. Therefore do medics have a vested interest, above those of their patient? Do they get the same plush treatment to go and learn BSL?

These figures are frightening, and it isn't about medicine, it isn't about being driven in the best interests of a Deaf child - its about money, in the form of profits. Its about status. It's frightening.

Alison Bryan, 2003

for The Voice

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