31 October 2007

Dear Ms Saile

Re: Assessment Report (AR) - Cochlear implants for severe to profound deafness in children and adults

The Royal College of Physicians is grateful for the opportunity to respond to this Assessment Report. In so doing, we would like to make the following comments:

- This document provides an up to date review of the literature on this topic. It endorses the view that unilateral cochlear implantation in children and adults is a cost effective intervention.
- It is extremely disappointing that the quality of data in the literature did not result in clear recommendations about the cost effectiveness of bilateral cochlear implantation. At the present time NHS service providers are under great pressure from parents of deaf children and deaf adults to provide bilateral implants.
- When considering the impact of bilateral implantation in terms of complications where as most of the risks and complications are similar to unilateral implantation some other risks such as meningitis and damage to vestibular system may be doubled as a worst case scenario.
- More than 30% of deaf children will have at least 1 additional problem which may or may not be apparent at the time of assessment, these children require prolonged assessment and may be at risk of developing neurological disorders such as Epilepsy.
- The link of chronic magnetic field around both sides of brain and its impact on the developing brain has not been studied well.
- There did not appear to be any reference to the current FDA position on bilateral implantation.
- The PenTAG model used for analysis has limitations as highlighted in the text and important factors such as the influence of progressive hearing loss and medical aetiology of deafness may provide important prognostic information.
- If the recommendation about setting up a national registry for cochlear implant recipients is taken up and a robust reporting system is established as well as adequately funded research then it should be possible to assemble high quality data which should address the future research questions and priorities as suggested in the report.
- Because of the poor quality data about educational and psychosocial outcomes there is an urgent need for the Department of Health and the Department for Children Schools and Families to commission some joint research to look at these essential areas.
- In view of the increasing demand for implants and target driven NHS manpower issues are highlighted and this should also include increased recruitment of Consultants in Audiological Medicine as well as Consultant Paediatric Audiologists.
I trust these comments will be of use.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rodney Burnham
Registrar