Music to the ears: New implantable hearing aid program underway at Hotel Dieu Hospital

(Kingston, ON, Jan. 9, 2017) Hotel Dieu Hospital has started a new program for people with hearing loss who cannot be treated with regular hearing aids.

While most hearing aids are inserted into the ear canal and/or held behind the ear, a bone anchored hearing aid (BAHA)—which is at the heart of the new program in the Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic—is connected to a titanium implant in the skull, where it conducts sound directly to the inner ear, says otolaryngologist Dr. Jason Beyea.

“Regular hearing aids transmit sound that travels through the eardrum and middle ear to our inner ear,” he says, “but the BAHA is able to bypass that route and instead sends the sound directly to the patient’s inner ear, with excellent sound quality.”

In the BAHA procedure a titanium implant is surgically placed into the bone behind the ear. Once the implant has healed in place, a sound processor is attached and activated, providing excellent transmission of sound and significant hearing improvement for the patient.

The system works in both adult and pediatric cases where the eardrum and bones of hearing are not working, explains Beyea. For example, children who are born without an ear canal are candidates for the procedure because a BAHA bypasses the damaged or problematic area.

In July, Beyea performed Hotel Dieu’s and Kingston’s first BAHA procedure on 28-year-old Adam Pennock, who had lost much of his hearing in one ear from cancer. After the short outpatient surgery and time for the implant to heal in place, Pennock received a sound processor in late October.

“My hearing was muffled until then but now it’s excellent,” he says. “I can easily adjust the volume and microphone on the sound processor, and even make wireless connections. It’s very cool technology.”

“Bone anchored hearing aid technology has come leaps and bounds in terms of sound quality, power capabilities and feedback reduction in the past few years,” says Bonnie Cook, a Hotel Dieu audiologist who works with BAHA patients. “Being able to offer this state-of-the-art-device to patients locally here in Kingston is very exciting!”

Previously, patients in this region travelled to Toronto or Ottawa for the BAHA procedure, says Dr. Russell Hollins, Head of the Department of Otolaryngology at Queen's University, Hotel Dieu and Kingston General Hospital.

“We’re excited about having the clinical expertise to provide this treatment option,” he says.
Hotel Dieu Hospital is the ambulatory care teaching and research hospital for Kingston and Southeastern Ontario, affiliated with Queen’s University. We provide expert care to more than 500,000 people in the region through specialized programs including pediatrics, medicine, ophthalmology, cardiology, urology, surgery, mental health, oncology and urgent care. We deliver quality, safe health care, while advancing innovative research and educating the health care professionals of the future. **Leading the transformation of ambulatory care**

L'Hôpital Hôtel-Dieu est l'établissement de soins ambulatoires universitaire pour Kingston et le Sud-Est de l'Ontario affilié à l'Université Queen's. Il fournit des soins spécialisés à plus de 500 000 personnes de la région. Parmi ses services spécialisés, mentionnons les services de pédiatrie, de médecine, d’ophtalmologie, de cardiologie, d’urologie, de chirurgies, de santé mentale, d’oncologie et de soins d’urgence. L'hôpital fournit des services de soins de santé sûrs et de qualité tout en menant des recherches novatrices et en formant les professionnels de la santé de demain. **Chef de file pour la transformation des soins ambulatoires**

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