



August 2018

Hear and Say Microtia and Atresia Conference enters its 10th year

Queensland charity for children with hearing loss, Hear and Say, is celebrating 10 years of hosting parent focused Microtia and Atresia Conference for parents, health professionals, educators, and students.

Microtia is a congenital disorder which causes a deformity of one or both ears in which the outer ear is underdeveloped or absent. Microtia is almost always accompanied by atresia which is the absence of an external ear canal resulting in a conductive hearing loss.

The conference grew out of an interest from a small group of parents of children with Microtia and Atresia who, in 2009, had arranged to meet two American surgeons, Drs Joe Roberson and John Reinisch, who were on transit at the Brisbane airport, to find out more about ear surgery for children with microtia.

The surgeons decided the airport was not the right place for such a meeting, and instead volunteered to arrange to meet these families more formally at Hear and Say. Out of this, grew the first Hear and Say Microtia and Atresia Conference. The surgeons interest then, and today has not waivered, with Dr Reinisch and Dr Roberson being involved every conference since then. Both doctors pay their airfares each year, to help reduce Hear and Say's operating costs.

Over this time, the Microtia and Atresia Conference has assisted hundreds of families to gather what can be for them, a minefield of information regarding the best option for their child with microtia and atresia. Families from every state, as well as New Zealand and Singapore have attended across the year, and this year families unable to travel can view the conference on line.

The powerhouse behind the first and every conference since, is Hear and Say Microtia and Atresia Program Coordinator, Simone Cheadle, whose interest was originally sparked from her own need to learn more when her daughter Chelsea was born with microtia and atresia in 2004.

"Chelsea has since had her ear surgery however I know that every concern and question a new family has for their child, I had for my daughter Chelsea. This is what drives me each year to ensure the conference is informative, as well as hands on," said Ms Cheadle.

The hands-on part of the conference takes its roots back to its early beginnings, and parents remain just as keen to meet with the surgeons, so they can receive first hand advice regarding determining the best outcomes for their child.

These short meetings with the surgeons are a little bit like 'speed dating', explains Ms Cheadle.

"Each family is given a time when they can meet with each of the surgeons, my job is to make it as streamlined as possible, so that no family misses out."



The conference has grown in attendee numbers, attracting over 100 people, and now runs across three days. The first two days are allocated to a range of presentations from local and interstate professionals including Ear Nose and Throat specialists, surgeons, psychologists, audiologists, speech therapists and geneticists. The final day of the conference is a family fun day, bringing parents, carers, children with Microtia and Atresia, as well as their siblings together providing an opportunity for the adults to learn from each other, for the children to see that they are not alone, and for everyone to simply relax and have a great time.

The clear winner of the conference is the hundreds of children who have received better management and treatment.

The 10th annual Microtia and Atresia Conference is on 7-9 September, at the Hear and Say Brisbane Centre in Ashgrove. More information, and registration can be made online at www.hearandsay.com.au/2018-microtia-atresia-conference/ or call 07 3850 2111.

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For more details and to arrange interviews contact Lois Shuttleworth, Public Relations Specialist, Hear and Say at lois.shuttleworth@hearandsay.com.au or 0481 212 420

About Hear and Say

Established in 1992 by Dr Dimity Dornan (2018 Queensland Senior Australian of the Year), Hear and Say is a Queensland-wide charity supporting children and young adults across five centres, as well as via a Telepractice program for rural and remote families. Our current programs and services include audiology, listening and spoken language therapy, school hearing screening, social skills programs, and physiotherapy and occupational therapy support. Hear and Say is also committed to clinical research and professional development.

Our aim is to support all children to hear, listen and speak so they can attend mainstream school, and fulfil their potential across all areas of life. Hear and Say combines state-of-the-art hearing technology (such as digital hearing aids and cochlear implants) with specialised listening and spoken language therapy.

Almost 100% of children who have graduated from our early intervention program in the past five years have entered mainstream schools and are speaking at a level equivalent to their typically-hearing peers.

As a not-for-profit organisation, Hear and Say must raise over \$10,000 each year, for up to six years, to fill the funding gap for one child with hearing loss to listen and speak.

About Microtia and Atresia

Microtia

This congenital disorder occurs in one in 6,000 births world-wide. It causes a deformity of one or both ears in which the outer ear is underdeveloped or absent. Microtia is almost always accompanied by atresia because the baby's outer ear and the ear canal develop together during pregnancy.

Atresia

Atresia is the absence of an external ear canal and, in many instances the ear drum and ear bones can also be affected. This means that as there is no canal for sound to travel through, these children are born with a conductive hearing loss.