

Pioneering spirit and passion: Thirty Years of Translational Research on the path to overcoming hearing loss

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MED-EL is celebrating the fruits of thirty years of collaboration with clinics and research teams around the world with a unique, freely accessible publication

July 06, 2021 – (Innsbruck, Austria) – At the start of any success story lies a vision. With the mission of overcoming hearing loss as a barrier to communication, the groundbreaking research of the two industry pioneers Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair in the 1970s led to the development of the first micro-electronic multi-channel cochlear implant (CI) that forms the basis for today's modern CI. From the founding of their family owned business MED-EL – which hired its first employees in 1990 – to today, they have been driven by the vision of improving quality of life for people around the world with considerable hearing loss or other restrictions. Translational research is one of the key pillars of the company, which now employs more than 2,200 people from around seventy-five countries. With the newly released publication *Thirty Years of Translational Research Behind MED-EL*, the innovation leader explains and recognizes the countless results of enduring clinical and research partnerships worldwide that form the basis for the development of many groundbreaking innovations.

The importance of translational research

"What cochlear implants can do today seems like a miracle to many people. But this is actually the result of hard, painstaking, and collaborative work by teams of experts over

*the course of many years. After all, plenty of patience and stamina are required to persevere from the first idea or fundamental research to approval and reimbursement of costs for innovations in the field of cochlear implants. This is why I am delighted to pay homage to all those research collaborators and internal MED-EL colleagues with the compendium *Thirty Years of Translational Research Behind MED-EL* – they have supported us in pursuing our vision since 1990,"* explains Dr. Ingeborg Hochmair, Founder and CEO of MED-EL.

Thirty years of research and innovations

The compendium provides insights into the milestones from thirty years of research partnerships concerning cochlear and brainstem implants (CI and ABI). From the first research question or idea to the collaboration between clinical teams and their patients – as well as the various employees at MED-EL – regarding technological innovations to implementation in everyday use. Around 200 external scientific collaborators have contributed to the achievement of milestones, the development of evidence, and, ultimately, the creation of approved, refundable products and solutions for people of all age groups with hearing loss. *"All of us at MED-EL are very proud of the pioneering technological innovations we have developed over the past thirty years thanks to close dialogue with medical experts, scientists, and implant users. Together with our collaborators around the world, we will continue working towards our vision of facilitating hearing that is as natural as possible for all those with hearing loss,"* emphasizes Dr. Ingeborg Hochmair.

The future of cochlear implants

It all began with the determination of two fundamental researchers to solve a medical problem that had seemed insurmountable until that point. This pioneering spirit to build a bridge from fundamental research to everyday application for people with hearing loss is still firmly anchored in MED-EL's corporate culture to this day. *"I feel humbled and hugely grateful to the team of dedicated colleagues at MED-EL and the researchers from clinics and science with whom we have been working since 1990 to develop their ideas for products, treatments, and new indications,"* says Dr. Hochmair, looking back.

Today, regardless of age or the severity of hearing loss, a wide range of limitations can be successfully treated. These successes also provide motivation for future work, because even today, hearing loss remains untreated in many countries around the world. In 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) extrapolated that around 1.6 billion people are living with hearing loss. By 2050, the number of people with hearing loss could rise to almost 2.5 billion if medical care is not improved, the UN agency in Geneva estimates.*

"Together with our collaborators around the world, we will continue working towards our vision of facilitating hearing that is as natural as possible for all those with hearing

loss. Our next goal is to further customize treatment with CI for people of all ages, in order to achieve the best possible result in accordance with the principles of precision medicine," explains Dr. Ingeborg Hochmair, looking to the future.

The freely accessible publication *Thirty Years of Translational Research Behind MED-EL* is intended to encourage scientists worldwide, especially future generations of specialists, to take inspiration from the work of fellow researchers from all over the world and to share the material with their team members.

The book *Thirty Years of Translational Research Behind MED-EL* appeared as a supplement to the medical journal *Acta Oto-Laryngologica* by publishing house Taylor & Francis and can be downloaded online free of charge**.

* WHO, World Report on Hearing 2021.

** The full publication is available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00016489.2021.1914979>.

About MED-EL

MED-EL Medical Electronics, a leader in implantable hearing solutions, is driven by a mission to overcome hearing loss as a barrier to communication. The Austrian-based, privately owned business was co-founded by industry pioneers Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair, whose ground-breaking research led to the development of the world's first micro-electronic multi-channel cochlear implant (CI), which was successfully implanted in 1977 and was the basis for what is known as the modern CI today. This laid the foundation for the successful growth of the company in 1990, when they hired their first employees. To date, MED-EL has grown to more than 2,200 employees from around 75 nations and has 30 locations worldwide.

The company offers the widest range of implantable and non-implantable solutions to treat all types of hearing loss, enabling people in 124 countries enjoy the gift of hearing with the help of a MED-EL device. MED-EL's hearing solutions include cochlear and middle ear implant systems, a combined Electric Acoustic Stimulation hearing implant system, auditory brainstem implants as well as surgical and non-surgical bone conduction devices.

More than 95% of the hearing implants are exported and used by more than 4.000 clinics around the world. www.medel.com

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