

Back into the world of sound

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For the 9th time the most influential specialists in the fields of physiology and pathology of hearing, otology, otosurgery, audiology, acoustics, psychoacoustics, biophysics, bioengineering, psychology, speech-language therapy and education met to discuss the current state and future of auditory implants implementation, partial deafness treatment further implementation, development of rehabilitation and telemedicine and related subjects at a European symposium on pediatric cochlear implantation (ESPCI). The event was held in Warsaw May 14-17.

In a message to the participants, President of the 2009 European Symposium on Pediatric Cochlear Implantation Professor Henryk Skarżyński, head of the Institute of Physiology and Pathology of Hearing in Warsaw and of the International Centre of Hearing and Speech in the Warsaw suburb of Kajetany said: 'We are very happy that such an important Congress takes place in the capital of Poland, where, despite many organizational and economic problems, we performed, in 1992, the first cochlear implantation in Poland. Continuing our hard work, in 2002 for the first time in the world we applied a cochlear implant in an adult with partial deafness (PDCI). In 2004, also as the first in the world, we used the same procedure in a partially deafened child. We have all come a long way since those first implantations.'

For more than 17 years Professor Skarżyński's team has been using the most advanced technology and equipment, coupled with their own methodology, in the surgical treatment of hearing impairment, partial deafness and deafness. Professor Thomas Lenz, President of the 3rd ESPCI, told the Congress Tribune: 'I was impressed by the Warsaw Centre. The Institute in Kajetany is world-class. It can compare with other centres such as Hannover in Germany or the House Ear Institute in Los Angeles. Professor Skarżyński has an outstanding reputation and has contributed substantially to the field. He deserves to be the president.' Professor Lenz also spoke about issues examined at the meeting: 'The 9th European Symposium showcases our scientific work and brings together leading experts from all over the world. We have much more insight into the processes that are behind our success in hearing rehabilitation and we have made

substantial clinical and technological progress with better hearing results. New areas such as hearing preservation surgery in cochlear implantation have been developed, together with multimodal treatment such as electroacoustic stimulation. Other topics are central auditory prostheses, drug delivery to the auditory system, hearing preservation and regeneration.'

The story of one patient – hip hop musician Karol Nowakowski of 2cztery7 – quoted by the Congress Tribune shows how much of a difference advanced surgical methods applied at the Kajetany centre make. 'Without the implants I'm completely deaf. Thanks to the core implants and electric stimulation I can hear – I live' the musician says. Five years ago he was diagnosed with tumours on the auditory nerve bilaterally and in the lumbar part of the vertebral canal. 'Professor S karzyński decided to send me to Fulda Clinic in Germany. In 2006 I underwent the operation of excising the tumour and grafting the core implant on the right side. Rehabilitation took me a year. I started recording a new album with 2cztery7, but the tumour on the left side was getting larger. In March 2008 I ended up in hospital to undergo another surgery of embedding another core implant at the International Centre of Hearing and Speech in Kajetany. That's how I became a patient with two such devices. Also in 2008 I had surgery to remove the tumour from my spine, but my life is getting back on the right track and I'm currently working on a new solo album. I'm a messenger of hope. Life after deaf.'