

About the Providence Health Care/Island Health Remote Cochlear Implant Program

St. Paul's Hospital's Audiology Department in Vancouver is the only [adult cochlear implant program in BC](#) that provides clinical services for people with complex hearing needs, including assessment, surgery and rehabilitation. It also serves adult Yukon residents.

The first cochlear implant surgery in Canada was performed in 1982 at St. Paul's. Today, the program serves over 890 patients.

On December 4th, **Providence Health Care** launched a virtual-care collaboration with **Island Health** for cochlear implant patients for their annual follow-up appointment.

The remote service enables Cochlear Implant audiologists at St. Paul's to conduct appointments for Island Health patients remotely, saving patients time, money, and, during COVID-19, health risks by avoiding travel from Vancouver Island to Vancouver.

This service has been made possible by the joint efforts of teams from Providence Health Care, Provincial Health Services Authority and Island Health. The project has the potential to expand to other parts of Vancouver Island, Interior Health and Northern Health.

Before the launch of this project, cochlear implant patients in B.C. were required to commute to St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver to attend appointments in person.

There are currently about 180 CI patients on Vancouver Island.

What is a cochlear implant?

It is an electronic device that partially restores hearing. It is for people with such severe hearing loss that hearing aids no longer improve their hearing. It consists of:

- A tiny electrode array inserted into the cochlea, the snail-shaped part of the inner ear that is vital for hearing.
- An external sound processor that sits behind the ear, captures sounds, then sends them to a receiver implanted under the skin behind the ear. The receiver sends signals to the electrode array.