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Learning to hear after cochlear implants

THE first rehabilitation centre has been opened in Egypt, to help children fully fit in with society and overcome any hearing or speech impairment, after undergoing a MED-EL cochlear implant procedure. The aim of the centre is to help children to contribute to society and lead a normal life.

According to Director Wafaa Youssef, the centre has successfully trained 32 patients through a speech rehabilitation programme following cochlear implant procedures. The centre's work is not limited to rehabilitating children, it also provides specialised services for the parents

of patients, to train them how to communicate with their children. The assumption that the operation alone is sufficient for the child to start communicating immediately is false; the procedure is only the first step on the way to being able to hear. The most important process is the rehabilitation phase that prepares patients to interact with society.

The different types of rehabilitation that the care centre offers to children include full day care, with the centre providing nursery care for children who have received a cochlear implant. During rehabilitation, the child acquires communica-

tion skills that would help him/her attend school in the normal way and interact with society with no restraints. The centre offers private rehabilitation care to children from the age of six who have undergone a cochlear implant operation. At that point the child may already be attending school, however, he/she still needs to enhance certain skills to improve his/her interaction with society.

Parents have a role to play in rehabilitation. So, the centre offers its services to help parents understand how to communicate with their children after the operation. This is done through organising

family meetings to discuss the different methods they can use to communicate with their children. In addition, the centre holds workshops, arranges lectures given by specialists and brings together several families so they can share their experiences and plan joint events. MED-EL Egypt's General Manager, Tamer al Shahat, said that more rehabilitation centres would be set up soon in a number of Egypt's governorates, since MED-EL was keen on maintaining its fundamental role in shaping patients' lives, and integrating them into society after the cochlear implant operation.