

Also in the beginning: a visionary scientist, Graeme Clark

The entrance to the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Melbourne (UOM) has Professor Gustav Nossal's words inscribed on a plaque commemorating the success of the cochlear implant in terms that put the achievement into its true perspective:

The cochlear implant is the first and only device produced by mankind which effectively restores the use of one of the human senses.

The Australian driver of research into electrical stimulation to restore hearing for the profoundly deaf was the foundation Professor in Otolaryngology at the UOM, Professor Graeme Clark. He was appointed to the position in 1969 at the very time when Paul Trainor was going through his BBE in implantable devices. It is interesting to note that the learning curves of the two critical drivers of cochlear implant commercialisation were moving in the same direction, at the same time, in the same small Australian market. It was inevitable that their paths would eventually cross and that they would collaborate. The success of that collaboration is attested by listings on the stock market and by the 160 000 people who formerly lived in a silent world and who can now hear birds sing.

The similarities between the two visionaries are many. They both came from and valued strong family connections and the educational environments that provided strong moral codes and leadership skills. Neither man was prepared to stay within the comfort zones developed by others. Both were determined to forge their own