Foreword

More than 34 million children live with disabling hearing loss, and the majority grow up in low- and middle-income countries where services are scarcest and identification comes last. The consequences of hearing loss left unaddressed in childhood are well documented and lifelong: delayed language, constrained education, narrowed economic opportunity, and reduced participation across the life course. Yet few conditions in child health are as responsive to timely, evidence-based care. Identified early and managed well, most children with hearing loss can develop language, learn alongside their peers, and thrive.

That early identification and intervention matter is no longer in doubt; the harder task has been translating that knowledge into competent, consistent practice, particularly in settings where caseloads are high, resources are limited, and the clinician at the chairside must make sound decisions without the scaffolding of a fully resourced centre. This is precisely the space that Evidence-Based Practices in Paediatric Audiology occupies exceptionally well.

Faheema Mahomed-Asmail and Silva Kuschke have assembled a remarkably complete account of the paediatric audiological journey — from the prevalence and profiles of childhood hearing loss and the anatomy and physiology of the developing ear, through screening, behavioural and electrophysiological assessment, and vestibular and auditory processing evaluation, to surgical, non-implantable and implantable management, aural (re)habilitation, communication and educational options, and the increasingly central roles of telehealth and person- and family-centred care. The contributing authors, drawn from across South Africa and the wider international community, bring both research authority and hard-won clinical experience to every chapter.

What distinguishes this volume is its determination to be useful. The evidence is current and carefully cited, but it is never left abstract; it is consistently translated into practical, real-world guidance that a clinician can apply on Monday morning. The book is honest about context, attentive throughout to the realities of resource-constrained and emerging settings, and grounded in an interdisciplinary philosophy that places the child and family — and the family's choice of language, the language of their heart — at the centre of every decision.

It has been a privilege to watch both editors grow into the scholars and clinicians they are, and a particular pleasure to see them bring this project to fruition. This book will serve students seeking a trustworthy foundation, clinicians seeking a practical reference, and educators seeking a coherent and contemporary text. It will, I am confident, improve the care that children with hearing loss receive — in South Africa, and well beyond it.

De Wet Swanepoel, PhD
Professor, Department of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology
University of Pretoria, South Africa
Editor-in-Chief, International Journal of Audiology