



THE OHIO STATE  
UNIVERSITY

WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

## Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery

The Ohio State University College of Medicine

# Year in Review 2023

## Our Mission

The Ohio State University Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery is guided by a mission to deliver exceptionally safe, high-quality, value-based care. We do this through a commitment to and focus on maintaining the highest standards in patient care and research. Our team has created a desirable patient care model that enables continued expansion of patient volume. Our large and diverse patient population also provides a rich environment for medical education.

### The Department of Otolaryngology comprises 10 specialty areas:

- Allergy and Immunology
- Audiology
- Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- General Adult and Pediatric Otolaryngology
- Head and Neck Oncology
- Laryngology
- Otology, Neurotology and Cranial Base Surgery
- Rhinology
- Skull Base Surgery
- Sleep Surgery





## Table of Contents | 2023

### Research and Innovation

Emily Plowman, PhD, brings aerodigestive research to Ohio State .....	11
Yin Ren, MD, PhD, receives Career Development Award from the NIH.....	11
Chemosensory research offers new pathways for understanding the impact of COVID-19 and the potential for universal testing .....	12
Novel research may pave the way for new hearing loss treatments.....	14
Study finds new way to determine genetic progression leading to cancer .....	15

### Clinical Practice

Neurotologist Desi Schoo, MD, joins Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery to launch clinical vestibular research center .....	17
Eugene Chio, MD, implants his 600th upper airway stimulation device .....	17
Ohio State’s cochlear implant program is a model for growth and innovation .....	18
Laryngology team increases impact with research and clinical innovations .....	20
Unique neurotology-neurosurgery partnership raises the bar on skull-base surgery safety.....	22

### Education

Ohio State hosts prominent head and neck course for first time in new anatomy lab.....	25
Robust fellowship programs offer specialized learning for elite otolaryngology candidates ....	26
Ohio State otolaryngology residency program expands while holding its top-5 ranking .....	28
Temporal bone lab renovations will further strengthen residents’ surgical skills .....	30

### Leadership and Recognition

ENT department chair named to prestigious national leadership post.....	33
Dr. America finalist Kara Wada, MD, uses pageant platform to bring attention to invisible illnesses.....	33
Women surgeons lead the way to close the gender gap in ENT.....	34
For busy otolaryngology faculty, higher education isn’t out of reach.....	36

### Philanthropy

Ohio State providers raise more than \$1 million for head and neck cancer research .....	38
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**James Rocco, MD, PhD**

**Professor and Chair  
Department of Otolaryngology –  
Head and Neck Surgery**

*The Ohio State University College of Medicine*

**The Mary E. and John W. Alford Research  
Chair in Head and Neck Cancer**

*The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer  
Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and  
Richard J. Solove Research Institute*

## Letter from the Chair

The Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery had much to celebrate in FY23, once again earning the No. 11 spot in the Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research rankings; being named the No. 5 otolaryngology residency program in the nation by Doximity Residency Navigator; and being named among the top ENT programs in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*.

I'm grateful for these outstanding achievements and am excited to share these highlights with you.

### Research and innovation

For the last six years, our team has worked to improve our research funding portfolio and become a national leader in the advancement of otolaryngology. I'm so pleased that our NIH funding stayed steady at \$5.3 million for FY23, helping us maintain the No. 11 spot among all ear, nose and throat programs in the 2022 Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research rankings. Our consistent placement was due in part to R01 and R13 grants earned by Kai Zhao, PhD, R01 and P01 grants earned by Ruili Xie, PhD; and a K Award earned by Yin Ren, MD, PhD.

### Clinical practice

Clinical growth across our department continues to skyrocket. To meet additional access demands in 2023, we proudly welcomed Desi Schoo, MD, to our Division of Otolaryngology, Neurotology and Skull Base Surgery. Dr. Schoo will focus on vestibular clinical care and research and hopes to greatly improve results for that patient population.

We also saw exponential growth within the Division of Laryngology, not only in terms of patient volumes, but also with the addition of prominent researcher Emily Plowman, PhD. Together with Apoorva Ramaswamy, MD, the two plan to create a world-class dysphagia center that will advance clinical care models and patient outcomes.

### Education

Our residency program continues to grow in size and reputation, now in its sixth year of five residents per year. The outcomes of this expansion have been tremendous, helping us maintain our No. 5 ranking in the Doximity Residency Navigator survey results for 2023. I thank program director Brad deSilva, MD,

for his unwavering guidance of these efforts, as well as his work to make our residency program one of the largest and most comprehensive in the nation.

I'm also very pleased by the addition of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery to our fellowship program lineup. Boasting seven very strong, very specialized programs, I'm pleased that our department offers so many young ENT physicians the opportunity to work with world-renowned colleagues and hone the surgical skills they need to succeed.

### Leadership and recognition

In addition to their clinical and academic responsibilities, our faculty members remain committed to embracing leadership opportunities. I'm proud that so many of my colleagues have been named leaders within professional organizations this year, and I'm delighted to see so many familiar names listed among Castle Connolly Top Doctors. Highlights of my team's individual achievements can be found on page 32 of this report.

### Philanthropy

As research funding has waned from governmental sources, community engagement to create a cancer-free world is incredibly important. That's why philanthropic efforts continue to lead many of Ohio State's clinical and medical advancements, which include enhanced cancer treatment and therapy, prevention and early diagnosis. I'm particularly grateful to our very own Team Head and Neck, which has participated in the Pelotonia bike ride since it began in 2009 and raised more than \$1.3 million. We're starting to see cancer breakthroughs and cures that we've never seen before, and I'm thankful for my team's dedication to the cause — both inside and outside the operating room.

**“To say that 2023 was a success is an understatement and I hope that 2024 will be another productive year for us all. On behalf of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, please enjoy reading our annual report.”**

# By the Numbers



## The Ohio State University College of Medicine

**Ranked No. 28** in research by *U.S. News & World Report*

**\$400M+** in total research funding

**20** clinical departments

**8** basic science departments

**2K+** active research studies and clinical trials

**5K+** total learners



## The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

**24.7K+** employees

**1,824** attending physicians

**1,031** residents and fellows

**5,455** nursing staff

**\$4.89B** revenue



## The Ohio State University

**65K+** undergraduate, graduate and professional students

**39K+** full-time equivalent employees

**580K+** living alumni around the world

**18** colleges and schools

**250+** majors



## The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James)

**1 of 56** NCI Comprehensive Cancer Centers (designated since 1976)

**Third-largest** cancer hospital in the country

**\$64.2M** in total NCI grant funding in 2022

**23** NCI grants awarded in 2022

**687** clinical trials available

**5.2K+** faculty and staff and **250+** volunteers

**1.7K+** cancer researchers



## FY 2023 By the Numbers

**Total Awards: \$7,514,280**

**NIH Awards: \$5,333,537**

**Non-NIH Federal Awards: \$1,989,660**

**Other Awards: \$191,083**

**Active Grants: 29**

**NIH Grants: 18**  
(including 13 R01, 1 U01, 1 UG1, 1 K08, 1 K99, 1 P50)

**Non-NIH Grants: 11**

**Active Clinical Trials: 37**

**Publications: 173**

In FY23, the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery published 173 articles in industry-leading peer-reviewed journals; continued to be a national leader in the exploration of ear, nose and throat, head and neck cancer and human communication disorders through 37 active clinical trials; and produced groundbreaking research funded by 29 grants from national sources.



Scan the QR code to see our publications, clinical trials and research funding.

## Emily Plowman, PhD, brings aerodigestive research to Ohio State to create comprehensive swallowing center

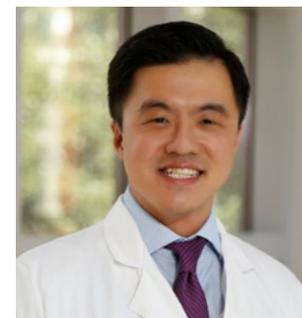
Internationally recognized researcher and dysphagia expert Emily Plowman, PhD, recently joined the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery to create a world-class dysphagia center. She plans to further the department’s mission to lead the way in interdisciplinary translational research by advancing clinical care models and dysphagia patient outcomes.



Scan the QR code to learn more about Dr. Plowman and her research.



## Yin Ren, MD, PhD, receives Career Development Award from the National Institutes of Health – on his first submission



Career Development Awards from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are highly coveted – and with good reason. In addition to providing financial support for a young researcher’s work, these “K Awards” are often a stepping stone to R01 funding. Fewer than half of K Award applicants are successful. Surgeon-scientist Yin Ren, MD, PhD, was selected on his first submission.

Dr. Ren, a neurotologist and assistant professor, joined the faculty of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery in 2021. In addition to caring for patients, he’s a translational researcher with an interest in identifying and developing better biomarkers and targeted treatments for skull-base tumors such as vestibular schwannomas and neurofibromatosis 2. The K Award will support that work with \$192,000 in grant money each year for the next five years.



Scan the QR code to learn how Dr. Ren plans to unlock the unknown.



## Chemosensory research offers new pathways for understanding the impact of COVID-19 and potential for universal testing

A multidisciplinary research team led by Kai Zhao, PhD, associate professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at The Ohio State University College of Medicine, recently received R01 and R13 grants to study chemosensory impacts from COVID-19 and to promote universal chemosensory testing.

The COVID-19 virus has had a strong, long-term impact on the sense of smell, especially when compared to other viruses. Up to 12% of patients with COVID-19 haven't gotten back their sense of smell.

"COVID-19 brought the importance of smell disorders to the forefront," says Bradley Otto, MD, director of the Division of Rhinology and clinical associate professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Ohio State College of Medicine. "We're now able to research better therapies and focus research on something that impacts people significantly."

From a patient care perspective, this research can lead to better predictive prognoses for patients by identifying the key reasons some patients have longer sensory deficiencies after infection. It may also lead to improvements in public health, including adjusting policies, treatment guidelines and resources for caring for patients.

"Even as the acute phase of the pandemic is over, we are trying to understand the overall impact of COVID-19 on sensory functions, recognize what recovery looks like and identify a surveillance system to catch potential variants," Dr. Zhao says. "Overall symptoms seem to be reduced now, but we don't know what future variants hold. We are doing testing to understand and be prepared for how these variants could affect sensory functions."

Along with continuing COVID-19 research, Dr. Zhao received an R13 grant as co-principal investigator, along with researchers from three other universities, to promote universal chemosensory testing, which aligns with research into sensory loss from COVID-19 infection.

"Everyone in the U.S. has their eyes examined during their life and every newborn baby gets hearing tests, but we never do chemosensory testing," Dr. Zhao says. "This pandemic was a reminder that we don't know much about chemosensory functioning for patients or have an understanding of baselines."

Dr. Zhao has researched how the complex olfactory structure in animals like cats contributes to their sense of smell and is applying that research to humans to identify options for chemosensory testing and treatment.

Currently, there are very few chemosensory tests available, and those that exist are mostly found within ENT specialties. Dr. Zhao's research aims to make chemosensory testing accessible for everyone, especially at early stages of life. That way, providers can establish baselines and better recognize congenital smell and taste loss later in life.

As part of a broader, national research effort, Dr. Zhao is part of a research team at the College of Medicine using hard candy as a tool for universal screening.

"Candy is stable, low-tech and accessible almost everywhere," Dr. Zhao says. "It has a taste and smell component and, being candy, is palatable for young children."

Moreover, this research may have implications for the early identification of neurodegenerative diseases since loss of sense of smell is a symptom of conditions like Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. Universal screening can also help a lot of people who have sensory alterations and many who don't realize they have a dysfunction. This research can also support patients with nasal obstruction, another area Dr. Zhao has analyzed in the past.

"Dr. Zhao was one of the first researchers to show how humans can sense airflow in their nose and what makes them feel like they are breathing well or poorly," Dr. Otto says. "We're taking it to the next level now and figuring out what it is about certain people's noses that makes them comfortable or not when it comes to nasal obstruction – and how we can resolve any discomfort with surgery."

As a tertiary referral center, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center offers a unique site to perform this critical chemosensory research.

"We benefit from having a multispecialty department and a multidisciplinary research team, as well as a lab on the same floor as our clinic," Dr. Zhao says. "Our research and clinical teams are very well integrated. Moreover, Ohio State has a large patient base to recruit from for research."

## Novel research may pave the way for new hearing loss treatments

It's been a productive couple of years for Ruili Xie, PhD, a researcher who leads the Auditory Neuroscience Laboratory at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

In 2022 and 2023, he secured two National Institutes of Health grants to support new studies on hearing loss: an R01 award from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders and a P01 project grant from the National Institute on Aging.

In the midst of launching these five-year studies, Dr. Xie published two scientific articles highlighting his findings from previous federally funded research. He also gave lectures at several universities.

### Innovative research may lead to new interventions

Dr. Xie's R01-funded study, which launched in July 2022, is focused on noise-induced hearing loss. Specifically, he and his colleagues aim to identify the cellular changes that occur in the auditory nervous system following moderate to traumatic noise exposure.

Today, roughly 18 months into the project, Dr. Xie says he's excited about his team's progress — and optimistic about the insights they'll gain.

"Although the cellular changes caused by noise-induced hearing loss are well studied in the inner ear, we don't fully understand how noise exposure damages the cochlear nucleus inside the brainstem," Dr. Xie says. "We want to pinpoint the changes that occur in the auditory nerve synapses and the neurons within the cochlear nucleus. By using transgenic mouse models, we can investigate these neural mechanisms in a way that's not possible with human subjects."

Specifically, Dr. Xie (pictured at right), and his team are using mice to identify different auditory nerve subtypes — under normal hearing and noise-induced hearing loss conditions. They're measuring and comparing functional and structural changes at the cellular and synaptic levels, using novel techniques that combine electrophysiology (to record neuronal activity) and immunohistochemistry (to see 3D changes in morphology).

"At this point we're conducting basic research to better understand the pathological changes that occur with noise-induced hearing loss," Dr. Xie says. "But this knowledge could one day lead to interventions that prevent or delay the damage that occurs after noise exposure, such as new drugs that reduce cellular damage or promote healing."



“At this point we’re conducting basic research to better understand the pathological changes that occur with noise-induced hearing loss.”  
 – Ruili Xie, PhD

### Additional achievements

Following completion of an earlier R01-funded project on age-related hearing loss, Dr. Xie authored articles about his team's findings that were accepted for publication:

- “Dendritic degeneration and altered synaptic innervation of a central auditory neuron during age-related hearing loss” (*Neuroscience*; March 15, 2023)
- “Apical-basal distribution of different subtypes of spiral ganglion neurons in the cochlea and the changes during aging” (*PLOS ONE*; Oct. 26, 2023)

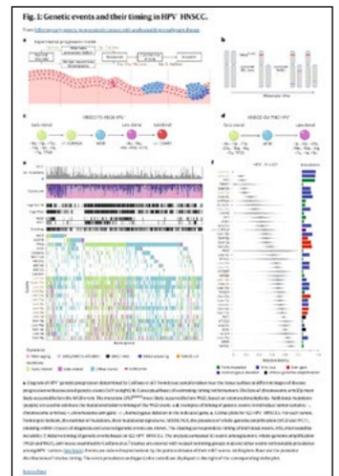
Over the course of eight months in 2022 and 2023, Dr. Xie also accepted invitations to speak at three universities in Ohio and California. His talks covered mechanisms of age-related hearing loss in the cochlear nucleus.

## Study finds new way to determine genetic progression leading to cancer

A multi-institutional team of researchers co-led by James Rocco, MD, PhD, and The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute (OSUCCC – James) has demonstrated a way to identify and understand early progression of genetic events leading to a type of head and neck cancer for which this previously was not possible — an advance that could hold significant clinical importance.

Reported in the journal *Nature Cancer*, researchers say that analysis of precancerous tissue often identifies the typical order of genetic changes leading to invasive tumors, helping clinicians determine better targeted treatments. However, premalignant tissue is unobtainable for some cancers, leaving genetic progression unknown and effective treatments less likely.

In this study, researchers used a computational method called PhylogicNDT to infer genetic progression in primary tumors by sequencing the exome, or the protein-coding region of the human genome, in the absence of premalignant tissue. As a result of this work, the genetic progression of HPV-related HNSCC was determined for the first time.



Scan the QR code to see how this study will impact the future of head and neck cancer care.

## FY 2023 By the Numbers

**Providers:**

30 (Ohio State)

13 (Nationwide  
Children's Hospital)

**APPs: 21\***

**Audiologists: 31\***

**SLPs: 114\***

**Total Encounters: 135,847\***

**Total Surgeries: 43,736\***

**Total wRVUs: 394,698\***

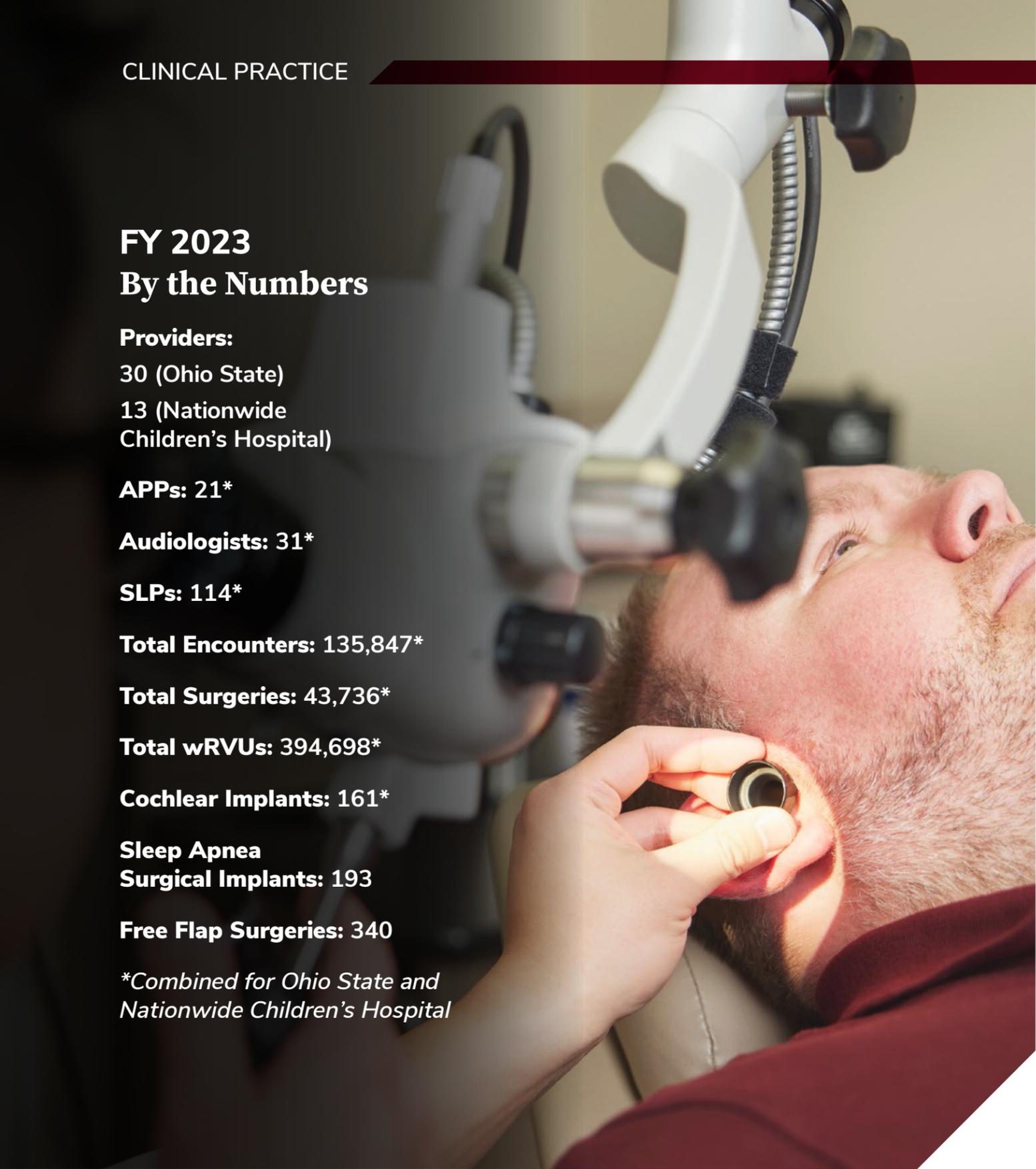
**Cochlear Implants: 161\***

**Sleep Apnea**

**Surgical Implants: 193**

**Free Flap Surgeries: 340**

*\*Combined for Ohio State and  
Nationwide Children's Hospital*



## Neurotologist Desi Schoo, MD, joins Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery to launch clinical vestibular research center



Desi Schoo, MD, believes diagnosing and treating patients with dizziness and inner ear imbalance can be advanced and improved. He joined the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery in August as an assistant professor in the Division of Otolaryngology, Neurotology and Cranial Base Surgery after completing a two-year neurotology fellowship at Johns Hopkins. Dr. Schoo's focus is on vestibular clinical care and research.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Dr. Schoo.



## Eugene Chio, MD, implants his 600th upper airway stimulation device

Otolaryngologist and sleep surgeon Eugene Chio, MD, has implanted more than 600 upper airway stimulation devices – more than anyone in the world. The device, sometimes referred to as “Inspire” after the company that developed it, is for patients with moderate to severe obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) who don't tolerate continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy. It delivers mild, unilateral stimulation to the hypoglossal nerve to improve tone and prevent the tongue from blocking the airway.



Scan the QR code to learn more about Ohio State's sleep surgery progress.



## Cochlear implant program is a model for growth and innovation

The cochlear implant program spanning The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center and Nationwide Children's Hospital is one of the busiest of its kind in the country. But that hasn't stopped its physician-leaders from pursuing additional opportunities to strengthen and grow the program.

By hiring new staff and conducting innovative research related to cochlear implant surgery, the team is making it possible for even more people to achieve better hearing.

One of the most striking examples of the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center's ability to meet the demand for cochlear implant surgery is its recent increase in patient volume. The number of eligible adults who received a cochlear implant grew from an average of 80-100 per year to more than 170 in 2023.

Neurotologist Oliver Adunka, MD, MBA, director of the Division of Otology, Neurotology and Cranial Base Surgery, says much of this growth is due to improved access.

"We've optimized our operations by hiring more audiologists and expanding our services to two new outpatient clinics," Dr. Adunka says. "This means we can evaluate more people who want to know if they're a candidate for cochlear implantation."

To make it easier for patients who don't live in the greater Columbus area, the team also partners with audiologists from other clinics throughout Ohio. These professionals provide a convenient, local option for patients who need multiple hearing evaluations before and after having cochlear implant surgery at the Wexner Medical Center.

"Because of our active research program, we can also offer cochlear implantation to certain people who might not otherwise meet candidacy criteria or insurance requirements," says Melissa Schnitzspahn, AuD, audiology manager in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. "For example, someone with good low-frequency hearing who doesn't meet Medicare criteria might qualify for cochlear implantation by participating in a study on hearing preservation in those low frequencies."

### Pediatric patients benefit from well-integrated, high-volume care

Dr. Adunka also has privileges at Nationwide Children's, where he and other pediatric otolaryngologists, including Prashant Malhotra, MD, perform around 80 cochlear implant surgeries annually. Here, patients have access to numerous hearing loss specialists, including:

- Audiologists who perform services ranging from hearing evaluations and device activation to cochlear implant mapping
- Speech-language pathologists who help patients interpret sound and learn speech after they receive their cochlear implant
- Social workers who can connect families with community resources

Dr. Malhotra says this team approach benefits patients and their families in several ways.



"We have a weekly meeting to discuss cases, which includes the surgeons and other professionals our patients interact with," he says. "This collaboration helps ensure the care we provide is well-coordinated and consensus-driven."

### Improving outcomes with robotic technology

As part of his ongoing research activities, Dr. Adunka has teamed up with other faculty at The Ohio State University to develop a robotic system that could improve precision during cochlear implant surgery – and help preserve residual hearing in a larger number of patients.

His research partners include Gregory Wiet, MD, a professor of Otolaryngology in the Ohio State College of Medicine, and David Hoelzle, PhD, an associate professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering within the College of Engineering. Together, they aim to create a device that causes less trauma when surgeons place cochlear implant electrodes into the delicate cochlea.

"Many people who are eligible for a cochlear implant still have some hearing in one or both ears," Dr. Adunka says. "However, when we implant the receiver during surgery, we need to manually insert the electrodes into the cochlea to establish an interface between the device and the cochlear nerve endings. During this process, structures inside the cochlea can get damaged, destroying that residual hearing."

Although some investigational and approved robotic tools are already available for use during cochlear implant surgery, there's room to refine the technology.

"We're working on prototypes that would provide more accuracy and control during electrode insertion, because it would provide a level of dexterity that mimics the human hand," Dr. Adunka says.

## Laryngology team increases impact with research and clinical innovations

The Division of Laryngology within the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at The Ohio State University College of Medicine continues to advance research and clinical innovation, leading to improved patient outcomes.

The division is improving patient access to laryngology surgery services at new clinical sites at The James Outpatient Care and Martha Morehouse Outpatient Care. Additionally, expanded voice services at Ear, Nose and Throat Westerville and Outpatient Care Dublin mean patients have access to world-class care closer to home, including voice exams and speech-language pathology alongside laryngology.

The department is also growing its innovative research through a collaborative model. Laura Matrka, MD, is the research director for the division and hosts monthly meetings with speech-language pathologists, researchers, laryngologists and the division's clinical fellow to discuss ideas. This approach has increased output for the division.

“Our team brings a robust research approach and is elevating our division nationally as one that is taking clinical scenarios, studying them and applying them across patient populations to help voice, airway and swallowing outcomes,” says Brad deSilva, MD, director of the Division of Laryngology and clinical professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Ohio State College of Medicine.

### Dysphagia research: retrograde cricopharyngeal dysfunction

Apoorva Ramaswamy, MD, clinical assistant professor of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, is building on her innovative research in dysphagia and breaking ground in the field of retrograde cricopharyngeal dysfunction, a condition that prevents patients from being able to eructate.

“This pathology is one that we’re only coming to recognize in the last five years, especially in younger populations,” Dr. Ramaswamy says.

Through her research, Dr. Ramaswamy has pioneered flexible endoscopy for Botox injections in this patient population, which allows them to avoid general anesthesia.



**“People who were aspirating are no longer aspirating. We are showing that there are real, objective improvements in swallowing functions from balloon dilations and other interventions.”**

**– Apoorva Ramaswamy, MD**

“Many patients have described the discomfort of not being able to eat a full meal,” Dr. Ramaswamy says. “Now, these patients are more comfortable and can enjoy their diet again. We have only known about this condition for a short time, but this intervention is well tolerated for now, and we’re optimistic about long-term patient outcomes.”

### Recruiting world-class talent

The Division of Laryngology, in collaboration with the Division of Head and Neck Surgery, recently recruited world-renowned dysphagia researcher Emily Plowman, PhD, who will continue her research across neurogenic and cardiothoracic patient populations.

“Adding Dr. Plowman to our team expands our research expertise in highly innovative areas like dysphagia and other topics in laryngology,” Dr. deSilva says. “We are looking forward to seeing where her work takes our division in the next couple of years.”

Dr. Plowman (pictured at right), has forged a partnership with Dr. Ramaswamy, given their mutual interests in dysphagia. Their first collaboration examined patient outcomes following balloon dilation procedures in the division's dysphagia clinic, revealing significant improvements in both airway safety and patient-reported swallowing function. Given the lack of historical treatment efficacy data, these will provide important foundational data to guide treatment planning.

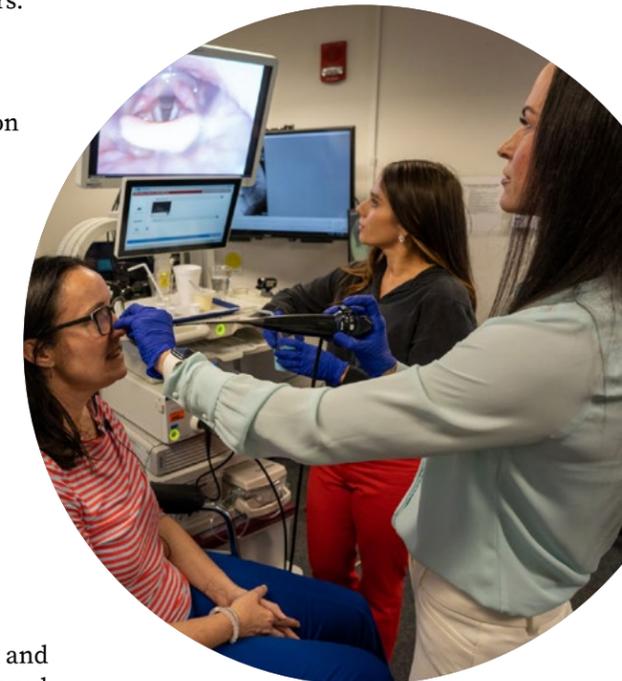
“We have been excited to see how people’s lives are improving because of these procedures,” Dr. Ramaswamy says. “People who were aspirating are no longer aspirating. We are showing that there are real, objective improvements in swallowing functions from balloon dilations and other interventions.”

Looking ahead, the pair are planning clinical trials to examine the impact of behavioral, pharmacologic, exercise-based and surgical interventions to improve swallowing outcomes.

“Given that dysphagia is a complex disorder, the conceptualization and implementation of truly translational clinical research is best achieved through team science,” Dr. Plowman says. “When clinical scientists of different backgrounds and mindsets work together toward the common goal of improving patient outcomes – that’s when the magic truly happens.”

As a tertiary referral center with high patient volume, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center offers the ideal environment for clinician-scientists to conduct translational and impactful research to advance the field.

“The primary factor driving my decision to join the department was the people – who I felt an instant connection with and shared vision for improving dysphagia patient outcomes,” Dr. Plowman says. “The leadership in the department supports, respects and embraces clinician-scientists, and the Wexner Medical Center provides phenomenal access to patient populations to optimize translational research that my lab performs. This was an amazing opportunity to join forces with a growing dysphagia team and to build a multidisciplinary world-class dysphagia center.”



## Unique neurotology-neurosurgery partnership raises the bar on skull-base surgery safety

A collaborative surgical approach used at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center helps enhance safety and outcomes among people with acoustic neuromas or other skull-base conditions.

Instead of managing such cases individually, surgeons from the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery and the Department of Neurosurgery team up to plan and perform lateral skull-base surgery. By operating in pairs, these surgeons can better optimize cranial nerve preservation – reducing the risk of complications like facial weakness or paralysis.

### Consensus-driven treatment planning

When a neurotologist or neurosurgeon from either department sees a new patient who may need lateral skull-base surgery, they don't hesitate to call each other to establish a solid treatment plan.

“Even though we regularly operate together, our collaboration begins outside of the OR,” says neurosurgeon Daniel Prevedello, MD, MBA, director of the Skull Base and Pituitary Surgery programs at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute. “If I have a patient with disease around the temporal bone, I automatically bring in one of the neurotologists and vice-versa. We jointly see patients on Tuesdays, and together we discuss the risks and benefits of various treatments, including observation and surgery.”

In addition to co-managing patients with acoustic neuromas, these specialists also work together to treat conditions such as cerebrospinal fluid leaks, chondrosarcomas, chordomas, encephaloceles, meningiomas, paragangliomas and superior canal dehiscence syndrome.

### Two sets of eyes, two pairs of hands and twice the expertise

In cases where surgery is the ideal option, both specialists decide on the best technique for each patient.



“If I have a patient with disease around the temporal bone, I automatically bring in one of the neurotologists and vice-versa. We jointly see patients on Tuesdays, and together we discuss the risks and benefits of various treatments, including observation and surgery.”

– Daniel Prevedello, MD, MBA

“There are different ways to approach skull-base tumors and we offer them all,” says Dr. Adunka, director of the Division of Otolaryngology, Neurotology and Cranial Base Surgery. “Because we have experience performing translabyrinthine, middle fossa and retrosigmoid approaches, we can choose the one that is likely to produce the best outcome instead of preselecting a procedure.”

Dr. Prevedello says once surgery is underway, having another surgeon alongside him is like flying a plane with a co-pilot. Among the surgeons, he and Dr. Adunka are one of the most established duos; they've worked together for nearly 10 years and share an exceptional level of familiarity and trust.

Having mastered the bony anatomy of the skull base, the neurotologist starts by performing any drilling required to expose the inner portions of the ear. This gives the neurosurgery team access to the deeper areas within the skull, brain and brainstem.

“Acoustic neuromas and other skull-base tumors are difficult to resect, and surgery can have high rates of incidental facial palsy and hearing loss,” Dr. Prevedello says. “But with two of us in the OR, we can double-check with each other before making certain movements and we can provide constant feedback.”

### Comprehensive, well-coordinated care

Because many of their patients need other treatments in addition to skull-base surgery, the neurotologists and neurosurgeons often collaborate with specialists outside of their core team.

“While our surgical approach certainly contributes to our excellent outcomes, that's not the only factor,” Dr. Adunka says. “We're also a high-volume academic health center that offers any other services patients might need to overcome or live well with their condition.”

For example, people with neurofibromatosis type 2 can turn to Ohio State for any number of treatments. These range from skull-base surgery and facial reanimation surgery to radiation therapy, audiology services and cochlear implantation.

The neurotology and neurosurgery teams also collaborate on research related to skull-base tumors. Together with experts from Ohio State's Department of Radiology and Department of Pathology they collect and study tumor specimens through an active tumor biobank.

With access to resources like these, the surgeons routinely lead novel research activities that may improve skull-base tumor diagnosis and treatment. As a group, they're working on several active studies that aim to improve vestibular schwannoma and meningioma care.

“With our breadth of services and depth of expertise, we can customize treatment plans for every patient,” Dr. Prevedello says. “This leads to an exponential improvement in outcomes among the people who turn to us for care.”



## FY 2023 By the Numbers

**Number of Residents: 25**

**52% Male; 48% Female**



Scan the QR code to meet our residents.

**Number of Fellows: 18**

**Number of Specialty Fellowships: 7**

Allergy and Immunology

Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

Head and Neck Oncology

Laryngology

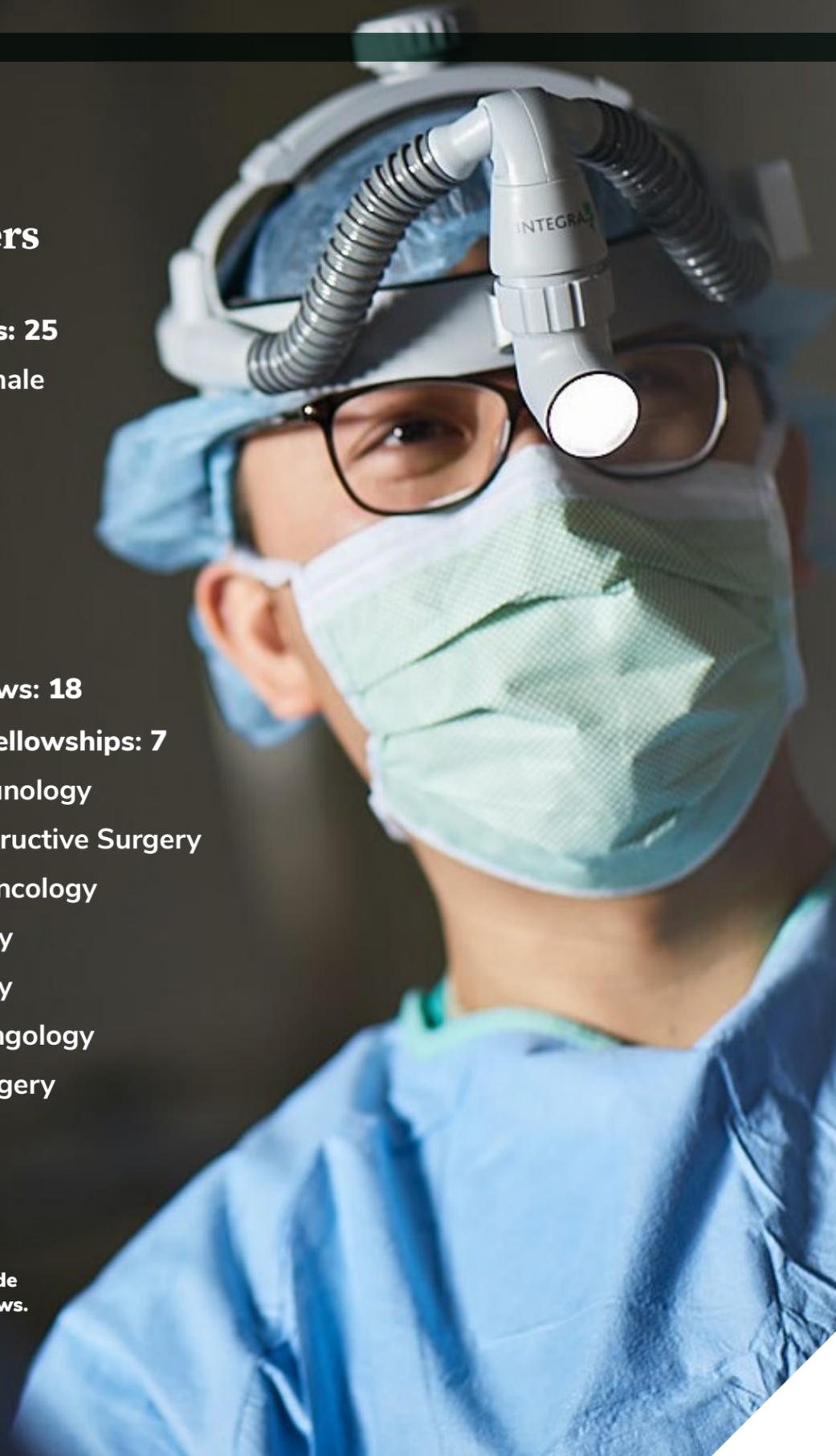
Neurotology

Pediatric Otolaryngology

Skull Base Surgery



Scan the QR code to meet our fellows.



## Ohio State hosts prominent head and neck course for first time in new anatomy lab

The anatomy lab at The Ohio State University College of Medicine bustled with learners and faculty in scrubs and surgical gowns in October as the university welcomed the annual Head and Neck Microvascular Fellow Boot Camp to its campus for the very first time.

The boot camp, now in its seventh year, brings fellows and faculty from all over the United States and Canada for specialized, hands-on training for those in the head and neck field. Widely regarded as the preeminent course for microvascular head and neck surgery fellows, the two-day course teaches techniques to address functional and cosmetic impairments caused by head and neck cancer treatments.

Using a defect-oriented approach on cadaveric donors, fellows work to reconstruct defects through osteotomies, plating, soft tissue inset and other methods. This year's course brought 40 fellows to Ohio State's anatomy lab, working in pairs at 20 stations, with expert faculty instructors overseeing each one. The event also featured a training portion for 25 residents interested in head and neck surgeries.

"This type of experience is as close to real surgery as fellows can possibly get," says Stephen Kang, MD, clinical associate professor of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Ohio State College of Medicine and course director for the fellow portion of the boot camp. "We really try to create a unique and valuable training opportunity for these participants."

Ohio State faculty in the Department of Biomedical Education and Anatomy and the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery were excited to welcome the course to the new anatomy wing of the Interdisciplinary Health Sciences Center at Hamilton Hall. The anatomy space, which opened last year, features six new, cutting-edge labs.

"This course trains fellows from around the country in our state-of-the-art facility," says Derek Harmon, PhD, clinical associate professor in the Department of Biomedical Education and Anatomy. "We have only scratched the surface regarding the type of continuing education courses that could be offered and I hope this course provides an example for future possibilities."

The course also helps build mentoring relationships and fellowship within the head and neck microvascular field, says Matthew Old, MD, professor in the Department of Otolaryngology.

"This course provides an opportunity not only for learners to connect with faculty, but also for faculty to learn from each other," says Dr. Old, who co-developed the course in 2016.



Scan the QR code to learn more about the boot camp and our sponsors.



## Robust fellowship programs offer specialized learning for elite otolaryngology candidates

The wide variety of ENT fellowship programs at The Ohio State University College of Medicine allows young physicians to pursue advanced training with a high degree of specialization at a tertiary referral center.

“We’re proud to offer fellows a high surgical volume with great clinician-mentors in a collegial environment,” says James Rocco, MD, PhD, chair of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Ohio State College of Medicine. “With our legacy of emphasizing hands-on experience, when fellows leave here, they are very well prepared.”

The Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery offers seven fellowship programs: Allergy and Immunology; Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery; Head and Neck Oncologic Surgery; Laryngology; Neurotology; Pediatric Otolaryngology; and Skull Base Surgery. These programs, which regularly match fellows, pull top residents from programs across the country. Some programs, like Head and Neck Oncologic Surgery, have expanded to include two fellows per year to accommodate high demand.

With so many program options, fellows can gain greater depth in specific areas of otolaryngology while collaborating cross-departmentally and with Nationwide Children’s Hospital. For example, the Skull Base Surgery fellowship blends advanced skull-base surgery and head and neck oncology. With one of the

“As the only tertiary academic health center in central Ohio, we can offer great diversity and high complexity of cases for our fellows.”

– Kyle VanKoevering, MD

premier skull-base surgical programs in the country at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, this program gives fellows hands-on experience with world-renowned neurosurgical colleagues, a high surgical volume and highly complex cases to hone challenging surgical skills.

“As the only tertiary academic health center in central Ohio, we can offer great diversity and high complexity of cases for our fellows,” says Kyle VanKoevering, MD, clinical associate professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Ohio State College of Medicine. “This provides an ideal training environment for fellowship experience. Combined with world-renowned skull-base surgical experts, our fellows receive personalized, dedicated teaching and hands-on experience that enables them to significantly improve their ability to care for patients.”

The Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery fellowship, new in 2023, filled in its first year with the first fellow joining in July 2024. This program is a unique collaboration with a community practice, which will give fellows the opportunity to learn in both academic and private practice and prepare them for a range of options after graduation.

“Fellowship candidates are coming to Ohio State because it’s a comprehensive training experience,” says Leslie Kim, MD, MPH, clinical associate professor and director of the Division of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. “We are unique in that we offer lots of experiences that provide a mix of cosmetic and reconstructive surgeries.”

Moreover, this program offers fellows the opportunity to learn under Dr. Kim and Ryan Nesemeier, MD, (both pictured at right), two leading physicians in the space of gender-affirming care.

The Laryngology fellowship, similarly, offers fellows a collaborative engagement featuring multiple perspectives. With five laryngologists, all of whom trained at different institutions, and multiple speech pathologists, the Laryngology division at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center is one of the largest in the country. This robustness allows fellows to learn several different ways of diagnosing, treating and managing voice, airway and swallowing disorders. This program also allows fellows to train in specialty areas like professional voice and dysphagia, a unique offering for advanced learning.

“When physicians come here for fellowships, they are making a significant time investment to gain significant experience,” Dr. Rocco says. “They want to come to a place where they are going to learn — and that’s what we can offer at Ohio State.”





## Ohio State otolaryngology residency program expands while holding its top-5 ranking

The otolaryngology residency program at The Ohio State University College of Medicine is one of the largest and most successful ear, nose and throat programs in the nation — and is set to expand to teach even more elite surgeons in the coming years.

“When people are training and going through medical school, they hear from others who speak very fondly of our program,” says James Rocco, MD, PhD, chair of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery in the Ohio State College of Medicine. “In addition to our high surgical volume and case complexity, there’s a culture of collegiality with good relationships between residents, faculty and staff. Moreover, Columbus is a nice place to live while going through residency.”

This year marked the first year of having a full roster of 25 residents after the program expanded to a five-resident class in 2018. The current cohort is one of the department’s most diverse groups of residents, both in terms of medical school training and gender diversity. Nearly half of the cohort are women.

“The program has changed every year as we have integrated five residents per class,” says Brad deSilva, MD, residency program director and clinical professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the College of Medicine. “With such a large program, each class has had different schedules each year of their residency training. It’s allowed more specific rotations and more in-depth learning. Residents can learn in community-based models rather than solely in hospital-based sites.”

This success has led to the program’s No. 5 spot in the Doximity residency program rankings, as voted on by physicians across the country.

“We’re fortunate to have a historic presence nationally with our department and residency program that consistently trains skilled surgeons,” Dr. deSilva says. “We also benefit from having our chair and other leaders traveling to national meetings, presenting research and being involved in mentorship.”

One key driver bringing residents to Columbus is the department’s reputation as a high-volume surgical program as well as renowned in all the different ENT subspecialties.

“Residents come out of our program with exceptional operative case numbers and they know how to operate; that’s a very positive thing for them,” Dr. Rocco says. “They also get exposure in all the subspecialties and gain a truer sense of what fits them best. It helps them become well-trained for that next step in their career.”

Now, the residency program has received approval from the university’s Graduate Medical Education office to pursue six residents per class. While a lengthy process, if approved by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, the Ohio State College of Medicine would be just the third program nationwide with six ENT residents per class.

With even larger residency classes coming in, the program can further expand to create new learning opportunities with specialty rotations like skull-base surgery and sleep surgery, two areas that are growing nationally.

“Residents can learn in a more specialty-specific rotation schedule where they develop surgical skills quicker in certain areas,” Dr. deSilva says. “With a large, highly involved faculty, residents learn similar techniques from a number of experienced and skilled surgeons. This allows them to incorporate strategies and techniques that work best for them.”

The larger residency class gives greater flexibility for residents to complete research, attend meetings and network for future roles without impacting patient care. It also offers residents a better work/life balance with improved call schedules.

“Generationally, people didn’t think about quality of life when I was training,” Dr. Rocco says. “Now, residency is more balanced. We pay a lot more attention to quality of life and supporting our residents’ well-being.”

This growth coincides with growing medical needs in one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the nation.

“Ohio is growing, and projections indicate that we won’t have enough medical care for all that growth,” Dr. Rocco says. “Growing our residency program is an investment for the future.”



## Temporal bone lab renovations will further strengthen residents' surgical skills

When the Eye and Ear Institute at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center opened in 2009, its temporal bone laboratory quickly became an integral part of the learning experience for future surgeons, including otolaryngologists and ophthalmologists.

Today — nearly 15 years and countless surgical simulations later — this vital teaching and learning space is getting a makeover. Once renovations are complete in 2024, the new temporal bone lab will offer a more modern setting for learners to hone sophisticated surgical techniques.

### Hands-on training in a risk-free environment

For residents learning to operate within the head or skull base, repetitive dissection is key to navigating these complex anatomical areas and mastering various surgical approaches and techniques. To that end, the temporal bone lab allows physician learners to practice on fresh temporal bone specimens and full heads.

“It’s so important for our residents to have access to high-quality training activities like those that take place in the temporal bone lab. By honing their skills in a safe, supportive environment, they gain the confidence and expertise necessary to transition from the lab to the operating room.”

– Oliver Adunka, MD, MBA



“We have 13 individual stations where residents can simulate procedures such as sinus surgery, skull-base surgery and oculoplastic surgery,” says neurotologist Oliver Adunka (pictured at right), MD, MBA, director of the Division of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. “For our otolaryngology residents, the lab is where they start to become proficient in techniques like endoscopic middle ear surgery, semicircular canal surgery and mastoidectomy. But given the rapid changes in technology since the lab opened, it’s time to overhaul the space.”

### Using technology to enhance teaching

Dr. Adunka says the biggest upgrade will be the installation of a digital video system that lets users transmit live surgery simulations to labs and lecture halls at other academic medical centers. With this technology in place, faculty members from the Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery and Ophthalmology teams at The Ohio State University College of Medicine can also lead virtual courses for medical students or residents throughout the country.

The individual surgery stations will also be updated with new tools and equipment, including surgical microscopes, drills, endoscopes, microdissection tools, suction and irrigation, temporal bone mounts and high-definition cameras and monitors for recording and watching videos.

### An investment in tomorrow’s top surgeons

The temporal bone lab renovations are being funded by the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery and the Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. Both departments will also share a full-time employee who manages day-to-day lab operations.

“It’s so important for our residents to have access to high-quality training activities like those that take place in the temporal bone lab,” Dr. Adunka says. “By honing their skills in a safe, supportive environment, they gain the confidence and expertise necessary to transition from the lab to the operating room.”

## ENT department chair named to prestigious national leadership post

James Rocco, MD, PhD, chair of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at The Ohio State University College of Medicine, was elected to a three-year term as president of the American Head and Neck Society Foundation. Dr. Rocco previously chaired the research committee for the AHNS, the premier academic society for head and neck surgeons.

“This is an exciting time to lead this foundation,” Dr. Rocco says. “My predecessor did a great job, and it is an honor to step in after him and be given responsibility to grow our efforts even further.”

The foundation was designed to serve research and educational opportunities through the AHNS. That includes young investigator awards and translational science grants.



Scan the QR code  
to learn more about  
Dr. Rocco's new position.



## Dr. America finalist Kara Wada, MD, uses pageant platform to bring attention to invisible illnesses



In October 2023, Kara Wada, MD, an allergy and immunology specialist at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, was named second runner-up in the annual Dr. America pageant.

This yearlong virtual competition, which promotes the idea that smart is beautiful, is open to women who hold a terminal degree in their area of study. Competitors must choose an issue or topic that's important to them, and highlight the work they've done to support that cause.

“I'm working to bring visibility to invisible illnesses, like autoimmune disease and mental health disorders,” Dr. Wada says. “People who have these conditions often look fine on the outside, but they don't feel fine. And many report that when seeking care, they're often brushed off or not taken seriously, which leads to delayed or ineffective treatment.”



Scan the QR code to learn more about  
the importance of Dr. Wada's platform.

## Awards and distinguished achievements

- **Charles Elmaraghy, MD**, was named a member of the Chief Research Officer Search Committee at Nationwide Children's Hospital.
- **Leslie Kim, MD, MPH**, was named a member of the Women in Facial Plastics Committee for the AAFPRS.
- **Meredith Lind, MD**, was named the education coordinator for the AAO-HNSF.
- **Amy Manning, MD**, was appointed to the Laryngoscope Investigative Otolaryngology Editorial Board.
- **Apoorva Ramaswamy, MD**, was appointed to the Publicity Committee for the Dysphagia Research Society.
- **Minka Schofield, MD, MPH**, was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society of The Ohio State University College of Medicine. She was also a recipient of the Clotilde Bowen Women of Excellence Award from the Ohio State College of Medicine. She received the AAO-HNS Distinguished Service Award and also received the AAO-HNS Committee of Excellence Award for the Program Advisory Committee.
- These faculty members of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery received promotions in 2023: **Brad deSilva, MD**, was promoted to clinical professor; **Ursula Findlen, PhD**, was promoted to clinical associate professor; **Laura Matrka, MD**, was promoted to clinical professor; **Minka Schofield, MD, MPH**, was promoted to clinical professor; **Nolan Seim, MD**, was promoted to clinical associate professor; and **Kyle VanKoeving, MD**, was promoted to clinical associate professor.
- These physicians from the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery were named Castle Connolly Top Doctors for 2023: **Oliver Adunka, MD; Amit Agrawal, MD; Carol R. Bradford, MD; Ricardo Carrau, MD; Tandy Chiang, MD; Brad deSilva, MD; Edward Dodson, MD; Charles Elmaraghy, MD; L. Arick Forrest, MD; Mitchell Grayson, MD; Jonathan Grischkan, MD; Kris Jatana, MD; Stephen Kang, MD; Brandon Kim, MD; Leslie Kim, MD; Monica Kraft, MD; Meredith Lind, MD; Prashant Malhotra, MD; Laura Matrka, MD; Matthew Old, MD; Bradley Otto, MD; Enver Ozer, MD; James Rocco, MD, PhD; James Ruda, MD; Minka Schofield, MD; Kara Wada, MD; Patrick Walz; and Gregory Wiet, MD.**



Female surgeons in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery are working to bring equity to the field of ENT. Pictured are recent Head and Neck Fellowship graduate Hilary McCrary, MD, MPH; Head and Neck surgical oncologist Catherine Haring, MD; and PGY-5 Sarah Nyirjesy, MD.

## Women surgeons lead the way to close the gender gap in ENT

With a sizable gender gap nationally among physicians (especially surgeons) in otolaryngology, Minka Schofield, MD, MPH, and Leslie Kim, MD, MPH, are working to bring equity to the field.

“Diversity helps promote unique thought and innovation,” Dr. Schofield says. “This perspective is very important at local and national levels. It’s something we must actively encourage because diversity in medicine, especially in the field of otolaryngology, can be challenging.”

Dr. Schofield, clinical professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at The Ohio State University College of Medicine and division director of General Otolaryngology at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, recently finished her term as chair of the Women in Otolaryngology Section of the American Academy of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS), where she oversaw the governing council, programming and initiatives. This section is one of the largest bodies of women otolaryngologists in the nation.

“I established very specific goals including promoting networking, fostering professional and interpersonal relationships, tackling issues facing women in otolaryngology like parental leave, partnering with industry to support leadership development and increasing visibility of women at the AAO annual meeting,” Dr. Schofield says.

Dr. Kim, clinical associate professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Ohio State College of Medicine and division director of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at the Ohio State Wexner Medical Center, is currently serving a three-year term as chair of the Women in Facial Plastic Surgery Committee of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. In this role, Dr. Kim is working to advance gender equity in the field nationally.

Just 13% of facial plastic surgeons are women, and there’s a significant gender gap in leadership, promotion, academic productivity and pay in the facial plastic surgery field. Dr. Kim is working to shift this balance and promote gender equity through educational programming that addresses leadership, mentorship, sponsorship, work-life integration, negotiations and practice management.

“We know that women lag far behind men in leadership roles like chairs and deans,” Dr. Kim says. “However, as the face of medicine changes, leadership should represent the trainees coming into the field who are our future.”

These efforts extend across the university. The current otolaryngology residency class at the Ohio State College of Medicine (one of the largest classes in the nation) is approaching 50% women. Additionally, the ShENT group in the Department of Otolaryngology works to connect women residents, fellows, faculty and staff through professional relationships, mentorship, coaching and social engagements.

“The average medical school class has more women than men, but this does not translate into women entering surgical fields of practice,” Dr. Schofield (pictured at right) says. “One way we’re trying to improve that at Ohio State is by attracting more women faculty to our department. This in turn leads to attracting more women residency and fellowship candidates applying to our program. The College of Medicine and department are deeply invested in making sure that women faculty are successful.”

James Rocco, MD, PhD, chair of the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, agrees.

“I am excited to see the continued growth of our department and the impact of our efforts to improve training and leadership opportunities for all our residents and faculty,” Dr. Rocco says.



**“I established very specific goals including promoting networking, fostering professional and interpersonal relationships, tackling issues facing women in otolaryngology like parental leave, partnering with industry to support leadership development and increasing visibility of women at the AAO annual meeting.”**

**– Minka Schofield, MD, MPH**

## For busy otolaryngology faculty, higher education isn't out of reach

In the era of health care productivity, it may seem counterintuitive for an organization to encourage its physicians to spend time pursuing another degree — especially one that's nonclinical. But that's exactly what's happening at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center.

Recognizing the value of higher education, leaders within the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery help accommodate faculty who want to obtain an advanced degree.

To that end, several otolaryngologists have earned (or are pursuing) a Master of Business Administration through the Executive MBA program at The Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business.

### Applying insights from the business world to the health care environment

Head and neck surgical oncologist Nolan Seim, MD, is more than halfway through the 18-month MBA program, which is designed for working professionals.

Participants attend a three-day, in-class component once per month and spend up to 20 hours per week on course work and group projects. The program also includes a weeklong domestic travel experience (Dr. Seim's cohort studied in Silicon Valley) and a two-week study abroad course in Spain.

Dr. Seim, who is director of Medical Student Education for the otolaryngology department, says he appreciates how his experience has broadened his perspective.

"Most people think an MBA focuses on finance, but it's more than that," he says. "I'm learning how to synthesize information from different sources, how to come up with creative solutions to problems and

**We need to know how to communicate effectively with patients and understand how certain operational decisions may impact our practice or department. The knowledge and insights I gained from my MBA classes helped fill that gap and has made me a better leader.**

– Ricardo Carrau, MD, MBA

how to be an effective leader. For me, getting an MBA isn't about earning a promotion. I want to add value to the clinical experience and, as I take on more leadership responsibilities, make decisions that have downstream benefits for our patients and staff."

Dr. Seim has already applied what he's learned in business school to his professional life.

"For a recent class project, I analyzed my outpatient clinic schedule to identify inefficiencies and come up with solutions," he says. "I completely revamped my clinical template and adjusted patient flow from check-in to check-out, with the goal of delivering more efficient care. We're still in the process of implementing these changes, but if the results are measurable and positive, it might be something we can emulate in other areas of the department."

### Gaining skills that aren't taught in medical school

Ricardo Carrau (pictured at right), MD, MBA, director of the Division of Skull Base Surgery, completed his MBA in 2019. He says his exposure to subjects like economics, the psychology of business and lean management principles allows him to see life through a new lens.

"Medical education and training programs provide specific hard skills, such as learning how to perform a particular type of surgery," he says. "But they don't teach the softer skills that could make us better physicians and leaders. For example, we need to know how to communicate effectively with patients and understand how certain operational decisions may impact our practice or department. The knowledge and insights I gained from my MBA classes helped fill that gap and has made me a better leader."

Neurotologist Oliver Adunka, MD, MBA, director of the Division of Otolaryngology, Neurotology and Cranial Base Surgery, agrees. He says the MBA program, which he completed in 2022, opened his eyes to the importance of financial acumen, accounting, management and leadership development.

"It's not enough to just have a seat at the table when business decisions are being made," he says. "I've learned to recognize the complexities that go into decision-making, and the value of other peoples' perspectives. Otherwise it's easy to make assumptions."

Dr. Carrau says he's also become more open-minded since getting his MBA.

"I've become more fact-based in my decision-making instead of relying on perceptions," he explains. "Even though medicine is very fact-based and data-driven, it's also compartmentalized. As clinicians, we don't always have the same level of exposure to the operational side of health care as our executive counterparts."

### An investment that will pay dividends

Dr. Seim, who will graduate in May 2024, says it's challenging to add master's courses into an already packed schedule — but the extra time and effort are worth it. He credits his department chair and other leaders for making it easier for him to get his MBA.

"My colleagues have fully supported my pursuit of this degree, even knowing it would take time away from my day job," he says. "I can put away my phone during class and give our instructor my full attention, knowing clinical coverage is taken care of and our patients are in good hands."





## Ohio State providers raise more than \$1 million for head and neck cancer research

Since 2009, clinicians and staff members at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center have helped raise more than \$283 million by participating in the annual Pelotonia bike riding event. Funds earned from the three-day experience directly support cancer research at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute.

In its 13th year of participation, Team Head and Neck, comprising 53 providers, family members, friends and cancer survivors and led by Matthew Old, MD, and team captain Molly Old, raised more than \$117,000. This year’s contribution brings Team Head and Neck’s overall total raised to \$1,396,867.

Rates of head and neck cancer are expected to increase in coming years due to the rising human papillomavirus epidemic. Research into new screening tools, treatments and supportive care will become even more crucial.

“There are many reasons I ride — for my patients, the community and my family members who have been affected by head and neck cancer. Philanthropy is critical in helping fund research for these devastating diseases.”

– Matthew Old, MD



“Philanthropy will help fund research and advances to stay ahead of the curve and get to more effective therapies quicker,” says Dr. Old, professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. “These innovations wouldn’t be possible without the support of our community.”

All funds raised through Pelotonia are used to support innovative cancer research, including enhanced treatments and therapies, prevention and early diagnosis methods, and scholarships for cancer research. For rare and devastating cancers like adenoid cystic carcinoma, dollars raised by Team Head and Neck and through other community events have proven critical in finding breakthroughs, like using the type 2 diabetes drug metformin for treatment.

“We have one of the largest databases of adenoid cystic carcinoma in the world and are well-positioned to do research on this cancer,” Dr. Old says. “I’ve been proud to further these research efforts through the generosity of our community, including funds raised from a lemonade stand and bake sale hosted by Santino Carnevale, who lost his father to head and neck cancer. Santino alone has raised more than \$135,000 to enable this breakthrough research.”

The dollars raised from Team Head and Neck have also helped support research by Catherine Haring, MD, assistant professor in the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at the Ohio State College of Medicine, into circulating tumor DNA and blood tests to detect fragments of different types of cancers.

The drive for Dr. Old to be involved in philanthropy to support research, like many of his colleagues, is highly personal.

“I’m motivated because I started at Ohio State in 2009, the year Pelotonia began, and have done every mile of every one of these events,” Dr. Old says. “There are many reasons I ride — for my patients, the community and my family members who have been affected by head and neck cancer. Philanthropy is critical in helping fund research for these devastating diseases.”

The Ohio State University  
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[medicine.osu.edu/departments/otolaryngology](http://medicine.osu.edu/departments/otolaryngology)

## Give to the future of ENT

The Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery is dedicated to improving lives through research and education. Our efforts have led to many advancements, including an improved understanding of language development in children with hearing loss and groundbreaking findings in the underlying factors contributing to head and neck cancer.

If you're interested in supporting our ongoing efforts, consider giving to the Schuller Endowment Fund. Honoring our former department chair, David E. Schuller, MD, the fund provides resources for research initiatives, helps us recruit the best scientists and enables important patient care improvements. For more details, go to [give.osu.edu/supportENT](http://give.osu.edu/supportENT).



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