

# **Why Otolaryngology?**

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**A MD2B Publication**

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## Why Otolaryngology?

# 20 Otolaryngologists Offer Reasons Why They Chose the Specialty

### 1

Otolaryngology is diverse in both patient mix and the types and complexity of procedures undertaken. It is a cradle to grave specialty, from neonates with airway problems to elderly patients with head and neck tumors. Otolaryngologists see more children than any other surgical specialty apart from pediatric surgeons. ENT surgeons also manage all the non-surgical care of their patients (as there is no sister medical specialty...Audiology, allergy, sleep disorders, voice pathology, balance disorders, and rhinological disorders can all form part of a clinic workload. ENT examination is specialized and uses lots of gadgets. These range from a simple head mirror (which will always produce a laugh) to a microscope for examining ears.<sup>1</sup>

Drs. Omar Najim and Steven Powell

### 2

My interest in ENT started very early from my childhood, I was always fascinated and simultaneously disconcerted with the potential problems caused by ear, nose and throat infections. The aspiration to provide solutions and eradicate pain was the principal incentive to choose ENT as my specialization.<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh

### 3

I liked the variety, the anatomy is fascinating and we deal with interesting themes - the ear, cancer, facial plastic, larynx, allergy. We see different age patients, and we have a mix of surgery and medical problems. I found when I was in medical school that most of the people in the field are happy.<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Richard Goode

### 4

During my medical school rotations I noticed that the faculty and residents in ENT were the only group of residents and faculty who seemed generally happy. And I said, "Wow, that's really interesting. What is it about this field that makes these guys so happy?" After two weeks on the service I found that the attraction was the high variability - as Dick says, half surgery, half medicine, from pediatrics to geriatrics.<sup>4</sup>

Dr. Willard Fee

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### 5

My specialty has always appealed to most of us just because of that variety – we see all ages from the tiniest neonates to the oldest older people. We manage conditions ranging quite literally from the sublime (insecure opera stars) to the gor blimey ('would you like to see what he coughed up / put in his nose/ found on the internet..). The pace is almost as varied as that of an anesthetist – one minute you can be gently scraping out a set of tonsils to the anesthetist's favorite jazz compilation, the next minute you could be careering down the corridor to the casualty clinic to assist with a gasping, exhausted emergency admission with an obstructive laryngeal cancer.<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Janet Wilson

### 6

There is a good combination of outpatient consultation and surgical work. With the exception of the head and neck cancer surgery, the majority of otolaryngology surgery involves younger patients undergoing 'quality of life surgery' such as improving hearing, the airway, voice etc. This can be quite rewarding for both the patient and the surgeon.<sup>6</sup>

Clinical Education and Training Unit

### 7

I love children, and the complex anatomy and physiology of the head and neck. I am very driven to make children's lives better. I enjoy walking along with families as they work to help their children grow into all they can be. I love working with my hands, and love working on small areas in a precise and artistic manner. I find head and neck surgery to be very high impact, with powerful effects on speech, hearing, swallow, appearance, breathing, smell, and taste.<sup>7</sup>

Deborah Sue Follmer Kacmarynski, MD

### 8

The practice of otolaryngology - head and neck surgery is an exciting one, as it involves aspects of medicine, pediatrics, neurology, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, and surgery. It is a specialty inclusive of all age groups from newborns with congenital anomalies to the very aged with profound hearing losses or head and neck tumors. Many of those conditions treated by the otolaryngologist - head and neck surgeon require periodic examinations with extended follow-up, so that the patient-physician relationship becomes more established. Some practitioners in otolaryngology-head and neck surgery concentrate in specific areas, such as laryngology, neurotology, rhinology, pediatric otolaryngology, facial plastic surgery, skull base surgery, or head and neck oncology. Others emphasize the medical or the surgical aspects of head and neck problems, including allergy, immunology, and communicative disorders. This broad mix of patients, medical disorders, and surgical challenges makes otolaryngology an exciting and rewarding specialty.<sup>8</sup>

SUNY Downstate Medical Center Department of Otolaryngology

## Why Otolaryngology?

### 9

“I found Otolaryngology to be the most challenging and rewarding field in medicine, and that’s why I chose to pursue a career in this specialty. The complexity of head and neck anatomy is incredible and mastering the ‘framework, plumbing and circuitry’ of this region of the body has been a gratifying experience. Otolaryngology allows me to use technology and delicate surgical techniques to improve a patient’s ability to hear...to smell...to taste...to speak...to breathe. As an Otolaryngologist, I have been given the opportunity to restore a patient’s ability to truly enjoy life. For this I am grateful.”<sup>9</sup>

Ryan M. Rehl, MD

### 10

“In medical school, I found that I really enjoyed studying the anatomy and systems of the head and neck. Even today, I find the care of the ear, nose, and throat — from medical management to surgery — to be both interesting and challenging. But what is most interesting and challenging, and rewarding, is that I get to help others. I am very fortunate to truly enjoy what I do, from the technical aspects to the personal human interaction. This is, after all, a very human undertaking.”<sup>10</sup>

Paul Guillory, MD

### 11

“In ear-nose-throat medicine, we have the opportunity to encounter, diagnose, and treat a wide variety of conditions and situations. This variety was a big part of my decision to devote my career to this specialty. Initially, I found the complexity of head and neck anatomy very compelling. After nearly two decades in practice, I am intrigued and compelled by the many different kinds of patients, cases, problems, and potential solutions. I became a physician in order to make a positive difference in people’s lives. With all the variables involved, I’m driven to consider them all and put my experience to work finding the best possible solution.”<sup>11</sup>

Renick P. Webb, Sr., MD

### 12

Identifying anatomical problems and repairing them surgically is especially rewarding. I enjoy using technology to minimize risk and discomfort during the operative period and seeing the fast improvement that patients of all ages make after surgery.<sup>12</sup>

Dr. David Roden

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### 13

"What drew me to Otolaryngology is the ability to use my medical and surgical training to treat both adults and children with a variety of ear, nose and throat disorders," he says. "It's rewarding to help improve their ability to function well in normal activities."<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Dennis Diaz

### 14

Dr. Roger Wobig has catered his practice in Portland, Oregon, towards general otolaryngology. And like MacCormick, he has enjoyed his work immensely since he completed his training at Oregon University. Wobig says he likes otolaryngology because it is such a broad field. "More generally, I like the fact that I treat both children and adults." There is no question in his mind what makes his work rewarding. "Fortunately, we have the opportunity to make the lives of people better," he says. Wobig says he entered otolaryngology because the many medical processes that take place in the head and neck region fascinated him. "I just think it is a fascinating region of the body with a huge variety of medical problems," he says. "I'm just extremely interested in it, and I'm happy to be practicing it."<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Roger Wobig

### 15

Leclerc went into otolaryngology because it is such a wide field. "You can work on tonsils, or you can put middle ear ventilating tubes in the eardrum. The field is, however, not limited to surgeries only -- it is wide because for many diseases, there is a treatment like medication or physiotherapy. And any cancer of the neck, any cancer of the base of the skull, or any major head and neck trauma are treated by otolaryngologists." It is also a field of medicine that is constantly changing. This forces otolaryngologists to keep up. Otherwise, they may not be competent to perform certain treatment. Consider Leclerc's experience. He started practicing in 1984. "And since that time, there have been at least 15 or 20 new procedures," he says. "So it is something that is always evolving." There are now over 200 separate procedures, he says. "So there is a wide variety of procedures. As a matter of fact, most otolaryngologists] don't do all the procedures. They cannot maintain expertise in all aspects of the field," he says. It all adds up to a work environment that is full of variety and challenges. "Every day is different," says Leclerc.<sup>15</sup>

Dr. Jacques Leclerc

### 16

"I love otolaryngology because I can help patients from birth all through life. I especially enjoy taking care of the kids, because common procedures can have such an enormous impact on their lives. Hearing a parent say a child has improved is always a highlight of the day. Sinus, neck and ear surgery are also of great interest to me."<sup>16</sup>

Dr. William Hofmann

## Why Otolaryngology?

### 17

I spent a lot of time in the operating room during medical school, and I loved it, so the decision to pick between medicine and surgery was not a difficult one. As a student, you get to help with simple things while in the OR: mostly lots of retracting, and some suturing. But just being in the OR and watching the surgeries from up close was incredibly exciting, not nerve-wracking at all. I just enjoyed being there and I could see myself doing what the surgeons were doing.

Everyone in my class was required to take a 1-week rotation through otolaryngology during MCY and I absolutely loved it. I liked the large range of complaints, the variety of surgeries and procedures, and the people in the field. One of the most unbelievable surgeries I saw during one of my sub-internships was a fibular free flap used to reconstruct a patient's jaw. The patient was 84 years old, she had had cancer, and the radiation caused her jawbone to die. She was eating when she fractured her jaw. The surgeons took a piece of bone from her leg, molded it into the right shape, and used it to replace her jaw in a 12-hour surgery. She did really well after that. It's amazing to me to be able to open someone up, fix something, and then they do better.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. Valeria Silva Marea

### 18

It's a broad and diverse specialty with patients ranging from infants to the elderly. The surgery is particularly diverse, from delicate and precise surgery to the ear, facial plastic surgery, endoscopic sinus and skull base surgery, to major head and neck resection and reconstruction for cancer. ENT surgery frequently involves the use of gadgets such as microscopes, endoscopes, and lasers. A significant proportion of an ENT surgeon's work is outpatient-based and this also utilizes a plethora of instruments. ENT surgeons provide complete medical and surgical care for their patients.<sup>18</sup>

Dr. James Mitchell

### 19

I've been a 'Mr. Fixit' all my life, starting with projects around the house with my father when I was young. So it's satisfying for me when I correct a patient's problem and greatly improve that person's quality of life.<sup>19</sup>

Dr. Richard Hillel

### 20

One thing that continues to make the work particularly satisfying for him is the scope of knowledge and diversity required to be an ENT. "It is fun to figure it all out," Hearnberger said. "And it is very gratifying to help fix people's problems with ENT. One thing I love about ENT is a lot of diagnoses we deal with are things we can fix or cure, so it is rewarding to be a problem solver. I think it is difficult for many physicians who deal exclusively with chronic disease. I have some chronic disease patients, but not as many as some parts of medicine."<sup>20</sup>

H. Graves Hearnberger, III, MD

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