Notes from the Chair

We are enjoying a beautiful summer here in the Twin Cities, which has come with the fresh start of a new academic year. We have two new outstanding faculty members. Dr. Sofia Lyford-Pike completed her residency at Johns Hopkins and her facial plastic and reconstructive surgery fellowship with Dr. Peter Hilger. She will have an academic focus on the treatment of facial nerve paralysis with cutting-edge surgical techniques. Dr. Luke Jakubowski completed his residency at the Medical College of Wisconsin and completed his pediatric otolaryngology fellowship at the University of Utah. He will be joining the pediatric team at Children’s, with his practice based at the University site.

We are very pleased to welcome four new residents and three new fellows. Our new residents are Drs. Tanisha Hutchinson (from the Medical University of South Carolina), Joel Stanek (University of Minnesota), Kristen Stevens (Vanderbilt University), and Tara Sulyman (Northwestern University). The fellows include Drs. Lauren Bohm (Pediatrics), Beth Kelly (Neurotology), and Jon Robitschek (Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery).

The website Doximity.com has begun to ask its members to rate the reputations of their training programs. Our program did quite well this first year in the national ranking of otolaryngology residencies, but we believe that we can do even better. If you have not joined Doximity, please sign up and indicate your support for the University of Minnesota program! The department is blessed to have many outstanding teachers, such as Sam Levine, who was selected as this year’s winner of the University of Minnesota Medical Center Clinical Teaching Award (selected from all specialties in the Medical School).

We will be moving the outpatient practice from older facilities in the PWB Building to a new 330,000 square foot building on Fulton Street next February. The Dean continues to foster research and educational creativity and productivity, and our physicians and scientists have been leading the charge. Drs. Holly Boyer, Sebahattin Cureoglu, and Samir Khariwala have each played critical roles in expanding the research programs of our department, and were promoted to the rank of Associate Professor this July. Numerous other faculty members at the University are also developing research programs of distinction, these breakthroughs our faculty are making will change the way we treat disease in the future.

Thank you to all of you who have made our department better, and who inspire us to be more effective teachers, more innovative researchers, and deliver better care. If you are attending the AAO-HNS annual meeting in Dallas this fall, please remember to join us at the Larry Boies, Sr. Society event. We will be celebrating at the Dallas Chop House on Monday evening, and of course all members, alumni, and friends of the department are welcome. See you there!
Ever leave a concert with your ears ringing? Or have a buzzing sound left in your ears after remodeling your house? This is a temporary annoyance after seeing Rollin Stones is a chronic burden millions of Americans deal with on a daily basis.

Tinnitus, pronounced TIN-nus or ti-NIGHT-us, is characterized by the perception of hearing without any external sound input present to stimulate the auditory nerves. It is usually a tonal- or noise-like sound sensation that can vary over time and vary to degrees of annoyance depending on many factors in people’s lives, such as stress, an injury, or too much caffeine. Over five percent of the American population (approximately 20 million people) struggle with burdensome tinnitus, and one percent of Americans have debilitating cases.

Tinnitus is not a condition in and of itself but caused by an injury or medical condition. In order to cure tinnitus, one must identify and address the underlying cause. An alternative approach, at least for providing relief until a cure is done without the collaborative environment at the University of Minnesota and local funding sources within Minnesota, such as the MnDRIVE Program and the Lions Hearing Foundation.

**SUMMER MEET THE FACULTY**


**Lions Voice Clinic: A Multidisciplinary Team**

**Clinical Director Stephanie Misono, MD, MPH on the passion behind the approach**

Communication is a fundamental part of how humans connect with one another. Person-to-person contact is a critically important part of the human experience, and even in the digital age, nothing beats being able to speak face to face with a loved one. Due to the critical nature of communication, individuals with voice problems can face major barriers.

Finding solutions to the complex problems associated with communication is what inspired Stephanie Misono, MD, MPH to pursue a career in otolaryngology, which focuses on several parts of the communication process: from producing the sounds needed for vocal communication to receiving the auditory signals and processing that communication.

“The larynx is fascinating,” Dr. Misono says of her specialty. “It contains two small vocal folds that, in combination with our breath, throat, and mouth, allow us to communicate with others.” This interest led her to pursue clinical fellowship training after residency to develop specific expertise in the workings of the larynx. Through her clinical experience Dr. Misono observed that voice problems can be associated with depression and anxiety. Patients sometimes withdraw from social activities because friends can’t hear them in group settings like get-togethers or in restaurants. Singers, teachers, and other vocal professionals face a loss of income, and their professional and personal identities may feel uncertain. Some patients also reported that stress made their voice problem worse, adding to the challenges they faced.

To understand the patients’ experience, Dr. Misono and colleagues used well-established scales to measure distress levels of patients coming into the clinic with a voice problem. They found that over a third of patients in the voice clinic had severe distress, which included anxiety and depression. The number of people with severe distress was about 3 times what would be seen in the general population. This spurred the team to search for strategies to help their patients feel better and do better.

Dr. Misono is now developing a program to help voice patients cope with their situations and stressors, increasing perceived control over a situation. The voice care team notes that voice problems can be complex and related to many factors, both psychological and otherwise. Their goal is to choose the best treatment for each patient by understanding who they are as a whole person, and what their voice means to them.

The Lions Voice Clinic at the University of Minnesota is home to a multidisciplinary team of laryngologists, speech language pathologists, nurses, medical assistants, and patient care coordinators. The team integrates medical/surgical perspectives with speech therapy perspectives. Backgrounds in musical and vocal performance also allow the team to address specific needs of vocal performers.

The Lions Voice Clinic is supported by the MDSM Lions Hearing Foundation. “The Lions generously supported key equipment that allowed the voice clinic to reach the next level in the early days,” says Dr. Misono. “They have continued to play a major role in what we do by supporting other clinical innovations and research studies that help us provide the best care we can. The Lions really understand the importance of improving communication in a comprehensive manner, whether by helping with hearing, voice, or both.” Working together, the goal of the Lions Voice Clinic is to help all patients have the best possible vocal function they can.
Treating head and neck cancer and improving outcomes

Once a week Samir S. Khariwala, MD, MS joins a team of colleagues to discuss head and neck cancer patients. This meeting is called Tumor Board and is comprised of patients’ entire care team, including surgeons, nurses, oncologists, radiation specialists, and research coordinators. Everyone meets to discuss treatment plans, offer advice, and decide what the best course of action is for each patient.

This multidisciplinary approach to treating head and neck cancer allows the team at the University of Minnesota to offer patients the best course of treatment for them. Patients that seek treatment here not only receive excellent care; they also receive the expertise and expertise that comes from physicians that specialize in the treatment of head and neck cancer.

“In my opinion, cancer care is best provided in a tertiary setting where you have a multi-disciplinary team whose focus is solely on eradicating cancer,” says Dr. Khariwala. “If you do a lot of something, you get better at it, and we aim to provide our patients with the best care possible.”

The opportunity to treat head and neck cancer in a team environment is one of the things that brought Dr. Khariwala to the University of Minnesota, as well as the ability to do clinical research that will impact that future treatment of head and neck cancers. His primary research interest is in tobacco-related carcinogenesis of head and neck tumors. Because the actual incidence of head and neck cancer among all smokers is relatively small, Dr. Khariwala is trying to understand what the difference is between those smokers that develop head and neck cancer and those that do not.

To find the difference, Dr. Khariwala has launched a study that looks at how people metabolize and excrete the carcinogens present in tobacco products. Essentially, does one group detoxify carcinogens better than another? The theory behind this research is that the intrinsic difference between those that get cancer and those that do not is based on how they are processing carcinogens. While all smokers must be urged to quit, many are unable despite multiple attempts and this research will allow physicians to identify those smokers that are at the absolute highest risk for cancer.

Dr. Khariwala recently received the Frank Lassman Faculty Teacher of the Year Award for his ability to teach residents intricate and complicated surgical techniques in an easy to understand manner. Not one to boast about his many accomplishments, it is clear his desired legacy is one of outstanding patient care and research that improves patient outcomes.

“Treating head and neck cancer can be very difficult,” explains Dr. Khariwala, “but it is a unique opportunity to intervene in someone’s life at a very vulnerable time, when they really need help, in a serious way. It is very gratifying work.”

The Paparella Ripple Effect

Founders of the International Hearing Foundation continue to support the U of M

Sitting unsurprising right across the street from Masonic Children’s Hospital is a small building that is not nearly as flashy. On the outside at least. Inside is a treasure trove from years of working in the field of Otolaryngology, and the trove is all inside Dr. Michael Paparella’s head.

A man that had dreamed of becoming a musician and artist, playing trumpet in a band during medical school, is now one of the most renowned doctors in his field. Dr. Paparella’s father told him flat out to make something of himself, and that did not include playing the trumpet.

“My father told me to make something of myself,” says Dr. Paparella. “He was Italian.”

This blunt proclamation promoted Dr. Paparella to start studying medicine at the age of 16 at the University of Michigan.

Dr. Michael Paparella has had a very successful career as a surgeon, even though that was not his aspiration as a young man. He wanted to be an artist and musician, playing trumpet in a band trying to catch a big break. “My father told me to make something of myself,” says Dr. Paparella. “He was Italian.” Playing trumpet was not in the cards from then on. Dr. Paparella started pre-medical studies at age 16, and as they say, the rest is history.

Dr. Paparella has created procedures and tools used in some of the most common ear surgeries in the United States. He has done research at some of the best schools in the world, including Harvard, and brought one of only three otopathology laboratories with him to the University of Minnesota when he became Head of the Department of Otolaryngology in 1967. He was the youngest leader the department had ever had.

What is more inspiring is the career he has started in the middle of his first.

The International Hearing Foundation, or IHF, was founded by Dr. Paparella and his wife, Treva Paparella, in 1985 after he retired from being Head of the Department of Otolaryngology at the University of Minnesota. It is a hybrid charitable organization that blends the University of Minnesota with the community to create a more balanced approach to supporting medicine and research.

This balance between the community and the University has served IHF well over the years. Hundreds of fellows from all over the world have come to train in Minnesota because of fellowships established by the IHF.

“The most important thing we do is teach,” says Treva Paparella, Director of the International Hearing Foundation. “Teaching creates a ripple effect, like dropping a pebble into a still pond: the ripple just keeps going and never stops.”

The International Hearing Foundation lives up to its name. Through this teaching ripple effect, the impact of IHF can be felt all over the world, particularly in Brazil, Turkey, and Japan, the three countries that boast the most fellows served IHF well over the years. Hundreds of fellows from all over the world have come to train in Minnesota because of fellowships established by the IHF.

The mission of the IHF is not only international but a local mission as well. Dr. Paparella is still involved with the University of Minnesota’s otopathology lab, continuing valuable research on diseases of the inner ear and supporting the research of others. The Paparellas are also large supporters of the University of Minnesota Department of Otolaryngology. They helped to start the department’s relationship with the International Lions Club while Dr. Paparella was chair. This decades long partnership has fostered excellent research and teaching that has allowed the deaf to hear.

Dr. Michael and Treva Paparella are supporters that create change for the betterment of the industry as well as support the longevity of that change, creating a ripple effect that will be felt for years to come.