

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1 | APRIL 2014

# DEPARTMENT OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY – HEAD AND NECK SURGERY NEWSLETTER

## Message from Dr. John Yoo



It has been some time since our last newsletter, however, we have not been standing still. Your Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry, Western University has undergone considerable change while maintaining its core values.

The Department has grown in size and academic scope. We now

have 13 faculty members at three hospital sites, providing the full spectrum of subspecialty care.

Our energetic faculty and residents epitomize clinical-academic medicine and are highly active in clinical and translational research, publishing more than 120 peer-reviewed articles in the past three years.

Our research enterprise includes: the Auditory Biophysics and the Translational Head and Neck Cancer Research Laboratories. Through these platforms, our clinician-scientists supervise residents, as well as graduate students at the master's and PhD levels.

Our spirit of collaboration continues to be the hallmark of our departmental culture. This can be seen in all aspects of clinical and academic life, such as our

multidisciplinary specialty clinics, the disease-based clinical programs, and joint research initiatives with basic scientists, various departments, and even other faculties at Western.

As an academic Department, we have always valued above all else, our wonderful surgical training program and our exceptional residents.

We are proud of our alumni who were once our students and we remain grateful to those alumni who were our teachers. Our reputation as a training program remains as strong as ever, and we are privileged to get the “cream of the crop” in the Canadian residency match year after year.

Recently, we received the highest praise from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons external review while being awarded full accreditation as a surgical residency.

The 40th year of the Residents' Research Day on April 25 is a remarkable milestone for the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. This day continues to showcase the impactful research of our residents. The event represents more than this; it is a springtime event that brings you, our alumni, back to your old home to rekindle friendships, make new ones, and celebrate together. For those of you who are joining us, welcome back to London and enjoy the day because this is *your* program.

– Dr. John Yoo

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### Dr. Moore takes on a new role

In June, Dr. Corey Moore will become the Vice Chair of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Specialties Committee for Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery for a four-year term. In receiving the nomination, Dr. Moore was informed that he was chosen because of the strength of the Program with the past Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons Committee review.

### Holiday Cheer!

The Department Holiday Party, a special tradition for the whole team was a great success once again. A record number of people were in attendance and everyone enjoyed the festivities.

### Dr. Rotenberg new Director of Postgraduate Medical Program

Dr. Rotenberg will be stepping into the role of Program Director for the Department of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery on May 1. He takes over for Dr. Moore who held the position for the past six years. Dr. Rotenberg is delighted to assume this responsibility. "This is an exciting time for change in our department and I look forward to working with the residents and staff to keep our program tops in the country"

**Congratulations to Dr. Sumit Agrawal on his promotion to Associate Professor.**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery Update

April 24, 2014  
Spencer Leadership Centre  
8:00 a.m.

### 40th Annual Residents' Research Day

April 25, 2014  
Spencer Leadership Centre  
8:00 a.m.

### Resident Welcome Barbeque

June 28, 2014

The Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery newsletter will be produced two times per year. Each issue will share department news, and stories about our people and our work.

We also want to highlight the achievements and celebrations of our alumni. **If you have a story to share, please contact:**

[DeptOfOtolaryngology@lhsc.on.ca](mailto:DeptOfOtolaryngology@lhsc.on.ca)

## 03 | FEATURE STORIES

### Dr. MacRae hangs up his white coat for the last time

“I’ve had a good run,” said Dr. Duncan MacRae reflecting on his nearly 40-year career with the Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery. It’s a humble statement for a man who has made enormous contributions in establishing the Department’s reputation and advancing academic achievements. Dr. John Yoo, department chair, agrees.

“Dr. Duncan MacRae has been the backbone of the Department for more than 30 years and has left an indelible impression on all of us. As the longest acting Program Director, he has influenced surgical training at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry and has helped shape Otolaryngology care in Canada,” said Dr. Yoo.

Dr. MacRae’s first connection with the Department began in 1972, when he began his residency at Western University. Originally hailing from Cape Breton Island, Dr. MacRae completed his medical training at Queen’s University before heading to Western for postgraduate work.

He became a member of the Department in 1977. He recalls receiving a phone call on the Friday of the Victoria Day weekend, with a request to join the team in London. He was given three days to make the decision. It felt like it would be a good opportunity, however, he first headed to Houston to complete a fellowship in neuro-otology.

As the Department grew, so too did Dr. MacRae’s role in it. He has served as the Program Director for the Residency Program for more than 15 years. Today, he considers this work as one of his greatest accomplishments. According to Dr. MacRae, there is no other Otolaryngology program in Canada that can match this Program, in terms of Royal College accreditation, fellowship and academic pursuits. The training program has been a real passion for Dr. MacRae. “I love working with the residents, you can learn so much from them, and they keep you young,” he said.

Throughout his career, he took on additional leadership roles serving as Site Chief at Victoria Hospital for 10 years, and as Chair of the Principles of Surgery with the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons – overseeing the core examination process for Canadian surgical trainees. He is completing his fifth term as President of the Clinical Teacher’s Association at Western University.

As a leader, Dr. MacRae has mentored and inspired decades of physicians, and has cared for countless patients.



“I have known Dr. MacRae for 18 years. He was my program director, my colleague, and my mentor,” said Dr. Corey Moore.

“Professionally Dr. MacRae has fought for every inch of what he has achieved. He, like no other, understands that every inch adds up and eventually those inches lead to miles gained,” said Dr. Moore. “All of those miles gained by Dr. MacRae during his career were used to benefit the thousands of patients he has treated and the hundreds of surgeons he has trained. Not one of those inches was for himself. In short, he is the penultimate surgeon, educator, and role model for all faculty and training residents of the Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery Department.”

His achievements have not gone unnoticed. In 2012, he was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award - Dean’s Award of Excellence for Faculty. Citing it as one of the biggest surprises of his career, he is especially proud of the award, as the nomination came from his own department.

Dr. MacRae believes that the success of the Department can be attributed to a number of things including the loyalty of the staff and faculty and the leadership style. “All of our oars are in the water and everyone is rowing in the same direction. Things are done by consensus, not dictum,” he said.

“I’ve had fun,” said Dr. MacRae, and now as he steps into retirement, he has a new focus, which will kick-off by helping to make final preparations for his son’s wedding, and becoming more involved with his work with the Piper’s and Pipe Band Society of Ontario and the Highland Games.

# 04 | FEATURE STORIES

## Personalized medicine advanced in throat cancer



The robotic head and neck surgery, performed at the hands of Drs. Anthony Nichols and Kevin Fung, Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery in 2010, made news across the country.

It was Canada's first robotic surgery to treat throat cancer and today, the patient Gil Legere continues to do well. The procedure was a positive step forward for patient care.

The work Dr. Nichols is now undertaking has the potential to forever change the care and treatment for people living with throat cancer.

Following the surgery, Dr. Nichols and his colleagues wanted to make sure that if they were going to offer robotic surgery, it was the best care option for every patient who was qualified. They asked themselves if they should always be doing the surgery, just because they could.

"Despite the potential benefits of robotic surgery, it has yet to be proven that it is superior to the non-surgical options," said Dr. Nichols. "We felt a responsibility to do more research to determine the best treatment methods for patients."

Together with radiation oncologist Dr. David Palma,

he started the long process of establishing a randomized trial with a grant from the Canadian Cancer Society Research Institute. The "ORATOR" trial was opened in July 2012 to carefully compare the effectiveness of surgery over chemotherapy and radiation. "There are many instances in surgery when new techniques and technology are implemented without clear evidence they offer better outcomes. More studies of this nature are essential to develop the type of rigorous information needed to improve care," said Dr. Nichols.

As the director of the Translational Head and Neck Cancer Research Program, Dr. Nichols' research program focuses on the identification of biomarkers of treatment sensitivity to radiation, surgery and chemotherapy in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC). As part of the trial, all the

blood and tumour samples will be tested with cutting-edge genetic techniques. "We know some patients will do better with radiation, and others will do better with surgery. With the genetic information generated from the trial samples, we will have the tools to personalize care for each patient to provide the maximal chance of cure with the minimal amount of toxicity," Dr. Nichols said.

Currently London is the only centre where the trial is taking place. However, the University of British Columbia, McGill University, University of Toronto and the University of Adelaide in Australia will soon be joining, making the study an international multi-institutional effort.

"At the end of the day," said Dr. Nichols, "we know one shoe doesn't fit everyone. We are trying to find out what is better for each individual patient."



# 05 | FEATURE STORIES

## Sleep surgery program offers new hope for patients

London is home to the only dedicated, academic sleep surgery program in Ontario, and people from across the province and beyond are now turning to the team to seek treatment and care.

It is thanks to a tremendous spirit of collaboration between a number of specialists, a strong source of funding, and the right equipment that such a strong program has been created. It has also taken strong and dedicated leadership from Dr. Brian Rotenberg.

It is estimated that nine per cent of men and three per cent of women suffer from sleep apnea. Treatment options are limited to the use of a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device or surgery. However, half of the individuals prescribed to use a CPAP discontinue using it. Using Coblation, Dr. Rotenberg is now able to offer patients a minimally-invasive surgical option with much more successful

results. It is so successful in fact, that 80 per cent of all patients who receive the surgery no longer suffer from the condition.

place between otolaryngologists, respirologists, dentists and maxillofacial surgeons in support of patient care is one of the key success

“I love seeing the look of happiness on a patient’s face following a successful surgery.”

The key behind this success, however, goes beyond the equipment. It is focused on finding the best treatment for specific patients. To do that, there has to be a team working together. Dr. Rotenberg believes that the collaborative work that takes

factors leading to an improved experience and outcome for patients.

Research is also an important component of the work being undertaken by the program. Clinically, Dr. Rotenberg and the team are investigating issues such as perioperative management, and pain management. They are also working with Hanif Ladak, PhD, Department of Medical Biophysics, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry on computer modelling of the upper airway.

It has taken several years to get the program up and running to be able to offer the level of care currently in place. Initial funding through the Academic Medical Organization of Southwestern Ontario (AMOSO) made it possible, as did a commitment by the hospitals and the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry.

The best part of the story, however, is that patients are now benefiting.

“I love seeing the look of happiness on a patient’s face following a successful surgery,” said Dr. Rotenberg. “It’s what keeps me inspired.”



# 06 | FEATURE STORIES

## Humanitarian trips offer lessons back home

On his first of three trips to Honduras, Dr. Kevin Fung, associate professor, Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, helped save an eight-year-old patient's life – an event that impacted him personally and professionally.

After discovering enlarged lymph nodes and a lump in the young girl's thyroid during a colleague's surgery, he made the decision to act. He completed a neck dissection without access to biopsy tests or an ultrasound device.

Instead, he had to send the specimen back to the United States in a peanut butter jar filled with formalin. Pathological opinion supported his diagnosis and the

of the local patients can't afford medications for the treatment of the disease, Dr. Fung performed several subtotal thyroidectomies.

The other component to the three trips was providing educational opportunities for the local physicians and volunteer learners from the University of Michigan. Lectures on a variety of topics took place in the evenings. Michigan students and residents assisted with patients in the clinic and during surgeries.

"The educational piece is longer lasting," said Dr. Fung. "It's that sustainable piece that is important."

As an associate professor at Schulich Medicine and dedicated clinical instructor, he found the trip

As an associate professor at Schulich Medicine and dedicated clinical instructor, he found the trip reflected the value of social responsibility and lifelong learning that the School promotes.



patient received the necessary follow-up treatment in the U.S. through funds raised by Dr. Fung's colleagues from the trip.

"I feel very proud that I played a role in her health," said Dr. Fung. "I've enjoyed watching her grow up since then." On his most recent trip to Honduras he visited the patient and her family for dinner.

These medical trips were organized by Dr. Fung's colleagues at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. As an alumnus, he completed a fellowship in head and neck surgery at the school in 2004. Dr. Fung was invited to participate on his first expedition in 2007. Two more trips followed in 2009 and 2011.

One of four attending surgeons and the only otolaryngologist, Dr. Fung worked in the temporary clinic and conducted surgeries.

Common ailments were large goiters requiring thyroid surgery, and Graves' disease. Because many

reflected the value of social responsibility, and lifelong learning the School promotes. "As a clinical teacher, it was enriching for me," said Dr. Fung. "I also wanted to educate myself. This was an opportunity to help medical care in the developing world."

At this point, Dr. Fung doesn't have any plans to return to Honduras a fourth time. "I want to be fair to other individuals who probably want to go," he explained. "I do encourage others, especially younger surgeons, to go and experience something like this. It really makes us think about the resources we have at our disposal and the costs involved."

Dr. Fung is currently focused on marathon training, as he prepares to race the Boston Marathon in support of the London Regional Cancer Program in April. View the four-person team's donation page at the London Health Sciences Foundation website.

## 07 | FEATURE STORIES

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### Postgraduate Program leadership — a study in balance and teamwork

Following six years as the Program Director (PD) of the Postgraduate Program, Dr. Corey Moore is handing over the reins to Dr. Brian Rotenberg.

He feels fortunate to have been allowed the time in this position and is grateful to all the faculty and residents throughout his tenure.

It has been a fulfilling experience for Dr. Moore especially given the unique nature of the PD position. “The PD role requires an individual to serve as a leader for residents and to have their backs, while at the same time supporting the Department and patient needs.”

According to Dr. Moore, this can be tough at times, especially when a resident may be struggling with various commitments both on a training and personal level.

Maintaining this balance was challenging at times for Dr. Moore; however, achieving it is something for which he is most proud. “I have done the best I could do during the past six years to keep the roles of the PD in balance. Conflicts have been worked out and our program has produced many fine surgeons during that time. I am most proud of that,” he said.

In addition to building the program, Dr. Moore also led the program through a successful accreditation during a time when educational requirements had been changed. As Dr. Moore stepped into the role of PD, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPSC) had just set new requirements for resident evaluation and education. Due to the recency of the requirements, the programs did not have many of the educational evaluation tools in place to meet accreditation.

Dr. Moore credits the talented surgical teaching faculty in the Department for helping to create the education tools for surgical and clinical evaluation of residents and the incorporation of the tools into day-to-day education and evaluation. As a result, the program was able to exceed the accreditation standards set out by RCPSC.

Overall, Dr. Moore believes his work with the residents was an opportunity to learn more about team work. It’s something that he witnessed on a daily basis, as the best qualities from a senior resident filter down through the ranks from intermediate to junior residents. “This helps the resident team to function effortlessly as a unit,” he said.

Looking forward, Dr. Moore believes that under

the leadership of Dr. Rotenberg, the program will become a national if not international leader in surgical simulation education. “With leaders in this field such as Drs. Sumit Agrawal and Kevin Fung, our program is ready to excel in this area of surgical education,” he said.



“The PD role requires an individual to serve as a leader for residents and to have their backs, while at the same time supporting the Department and patient needs.”

# 08 | RESIDENT Q&A

## Why did you choose to do your residency at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry, Western University?

I chose Western University because the Otolaryngology program here is known as a superb program for training competent surgeons to practise in both community and academic settings. During my elective time, I was able to see that this program places teaching, innovative research and excellence in surgical training as the highest priorities. I was also attracted to the collegiality and close-knit nature of the resident group.

## What has been the most challenging experience during your residency?

To be able to find a good balance between work and personal life outside of work.

## What has been the most rewarding experience during your residency?

Being trained at what I believe is the top program in Canada, by a group of highly trained and dedicated staff members with strong commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for their patients.

## What has been the most surprising experience?

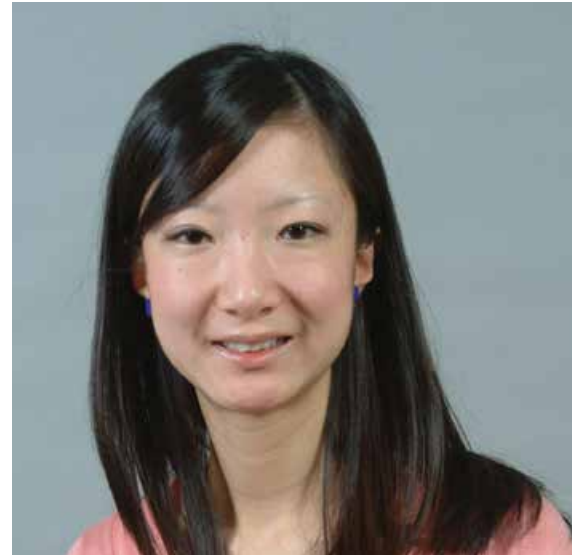
That a five-year residency can fly by so fast!

## Are you doing a fellowship? If so, where?

Yes, Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, with Dr. David Ellis, University of Toronto

## What do you do when you aren't working?

Spend time with family and friends, play with and walk my dogs, and run.



DR. SUSAN TAN



DR. BRANDON WICKENS

## Why did you choose to do your residency at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry, Western University?

Because Western has the best residency program in the country.

## What has been the most challenging experience during your residency?

Perhaps trying to answer this question!

## What has been the most rewarding experience during your residency?

Nothing beats a good foreign body removal. I and D of a juicy neck abscess is a close second.

## What has been the most surprising experience?

I'm surprised how quickly these five years have gone by.

## Are you doing a fellowship? If so, where?

Yes, and Otology/Neurotology fellowship in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

## What do you do when you aren't working?

I'll let you know when I find out!



# 09 | RESIDENT Q&A

## Why did you choose to do your residency at Schulich Medicine & Dentistry, Western University?

During medical school, when I realized I was truly interested in ENT, I followed the surgeons in my home of St. John's, Newfoundland. They are a fantastic group made up of former alumni of this program – Drs. Tony Batten, Ken Burrage, and Lorne Savory. Their immediate advice to me was to go where the training is the best, and to quote all three, they told me, "B'y London's the best. Gotta go to London. Good training in London b'y." Dr. Simon Kirby, another former graduate of our program, was instrumental in helping me make my decision, and giving me advice. To quote Simon, "Can't beat London. It's the best."

## What has been the most challenging experience during your residency?

The biggest challenge for me during residency has been maintaining a good balance health wise, both mentally and physically, as well as with work, family and of course, studying. I have learned a tremendous amount about who I am from being a resident in a demanding program and what I can handle, and also what I want to handle. These for me are valuable life skills I will always use and cherish for the rest of my life.

## What has been the most rewarding experience during your residency?

This is a tough question. Many things have brought me satisfaction during residency. Teaching the juniors some of their first skills and then watching them do it on their own is just one of the rewarding moments. But the most rewarding experience during my residency (besides getting married) was using what I learned here on my electives, and subsequently being told by each attending at their respective sites that it was clear to them that London was the superb training program in the country after they compared my performance to that of other residents from other programs who had visited.

## What has been the most surprising experience?

My most surprising experience was realizing that selecting a fellowship was harder than selecting a residency choice.

## Are you doing a fellowship? If so, where?

I will be completing a fellowship in Endoscopic Sinus and Skullbase at the University of Pennsylvania with Drs. David Kennedy, Jim Palmer, Noam Cohen and Nipun Adappa. It will be nice to be in the city of brotherly love for a year - Philadelphia.

## What do you do when you aren't working?

When I am not working, I hang out with family and friends. I travel and play sports when possible, and I have always been a big movie buff. That was my father and my thing when we wanted to relax when I was growing up - we would go get ice cream and watch a movie. That tradition still holds today.



DR. SAMMY KHALILI

## DEPARTMENT OF OTOLARYNGOLOGY – HEAD AND NECK SURGERY RESIDENTS

DR. SANDEEP DHALIWAL (PGY1)

DR. KRUPAL PATEL (PGY2)

DR. SAMANTHA TAM (PGY3)

DR. MOSKA HAMIDI (PGY1)

DR. CHANDHEEB RAJAKUMAR (PGY2)

DR. DAVID YEH (PGY3)

DR. JOHN SCOTT (PGY1)

DR. WINSION CHOW (PGY3)

DR. CHRISTOPHER CHIN (PGY4)

DR. MATTHEW HARRIS (PGY2)

DR. JORDAN GLICKSMAN (PGY3)

DR. JENNA THERIAULT (PGY4)

# 10 | ACHIEVEMENTS & AWARDS

**Drs. Brian Rotenberg and Jordan Glicksman** were awarded the Triological Society Travel grant at the Combined Sections Meeting Resident Research Competition held in January. Dr. Rotenberg will be inducted into the Triological Society in May 2014 following completion of his thesis entitled, **"Surgery as first line therapy for sleep apnea: awakening a tired debate."**



**Congratulations to Drs. Leigh Sowerby and Danielle MacNeil** on receiving AMOSO Opportunity Fund Awards.

Dr. Sowerby's research project is entitled, **"Improving System Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness by Applying Evidence-Based and Economic Analysis to Operational Issues in Surgical and Perioperative Care."**

Dr. MacNeil's research is entitled, **"Treatment and Outcomes in Head and Neck Cancer Patients: Developing a Population-Based Research Program in Surgical Oncology."**

In the role of principal investigator, Dr. Anthony Nichols, along with co-applicants Dr. Joseph Mumryk and John Barret received a \$29,840 grant from The London Regional Cancer Program Catalyst Grants for Translational Cancer Research and Training in support of their research project, **"High-throughput drug screening of human papillomavirus positive and negative head and neck cancer cell lines."**

Dr. Kevin Fung recently received the

## American Academy of Otolaryngology Foundation Honour Award

for recognition of contribution of a variety of activities and leadership roles in the academy foundation.



**Murad Husein** was awarded the Dr. Glen S. Wither Award for outstanding participation in the Summer Research Training Program (S RTP).

Congratulations to Dr. Anthony Nichols on receiving an industry grant of

# \$250,000

to study novel agents in the treatment of head and neck cancers.

# 11 | ACHIEVEMENTS & AWARDS



## CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE AWARD RECIPIENTS FROM THE 2013 RESIDENTS' RESEARCH DAY

Dr. DAVID YEH  
C.A. Thompson Award for Scientific Achievement in Otolaryngology

Dr. SAMMY KHALILI  
Department Perfect Pitch Award

Dr. JORDAN GLICKSMAN  
Peter Cheski Innovative Research Award

Dr. BRANDON WICKENS  
Simon Kirby Most Caring Resident Award

Dr. JENNA THERIAULT  
Undergraduate Teaching Award

Dr. SUMIT AGRAWAL  
Clinical Teacher's Award

DEPARTMENT OF  
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HEAD AND NECK SURGERY**  
NEWSLETTER

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