

**DONALD T. DONOVAN,
MD, FACS**

Olga Keith Wiess Chair,
Otolaryngology-Head and
Neck Surgery

Greetings,

If the year 2020 has taught us anything it is that our world can be turned inside out in a flash both literally and figuratively, and we do not really have as much control of events as we may have thought we did. In January 2020 the world in the Bobby R. Alford department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery was full of positives. The Department was settling into its new 26,000 square foot clinical and administrative space on the fifth floor of the Jamail Specialty Care Center on the BCM McNair Campus. The private adult practice formerly know at the Faculty Group Practice was rebranded to Baylor Medicine. Our new faculty recruits were all on board providing care to patients and infusing new energy into our educational programs. We were accelerating the growth of the Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery service line at Baylor St. Luke’s Medical Center, BCM’s primary private adult teaching hospital which had undergone an almost miraculous transformation under new leadership in 2019. Then in early March 2020 the first COVID-19 patient was admitted to a Texas Medical Center hospital and our daily routines have been altered in ways we could not have imagined only a few months previously. While our providers and staff have remained available and continue to care for patients throughout our affiliated hospital system, we have had to re-engineer our clinics and operating theaters to deal with the threats that COVID-19 poses to our patients and staff. We have rededicated ourselves to providing high quality care to our patients in a clean and safe environment. Our commitment to ensuring the safety of our patients without compromising the quality or care we offer is stronger than ever.

Although the pandemic has necessitated numerous changes in the way we interface with patients and one another, it has not deterred us from caring for patients, educating our learners or serving our community. In this issue we highlight some of the transitions that have occurred this past academic year and introduce some of the new, exciting faces in the Department. We hope in the coming year to not only endure the trials before us but prevail in ways that lead to improvements in our department and health care delivery system.

FACULTY UPDATES

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE FACULTY



Erich Sturgis, MD, MPH, FACS

Dr. Erich Sturgis joined the Department June 1 as Vice Chair of Clinical Affairs, Director of Head & Neck Cancer program in the department, and Director of the Head, Neck, and Thyroid Cancer services at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center. Dr. Sturgis came to us after a distinguished career at the MD Anderson Cancer Center, where he devoted much of his career to HPV-related oropharyngeal cancer epidemiology and worked broadly to disseminate the message of preventive HPV vaccination. He is the Surgical Chair for the NRG Oncology Head and Neck Group. He has more than 340 peer-reviewed publications, over 60 invited reviews/ book chapters, and over 230 invited lectures. His surgical practice is focused on thyroid cancer, sarcomas of the head and neck region, and general head and neck cancer surgery.



Tran Locke, MD

Dr. Tran Locke will join the Department in September of 2020. Dr. Locke completed her Rhinology Fellowship at the University of Pennsylvania at the end of June. Dr. Locke will practice in our Baylor Medicine group as well as at our public affiliate hospitals, Ben Taub General Hospital and at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.



Angela Haskins, MD

Dr. Angela Haskins joined the Department in the summer of 2019. She completed her Fellowship in Head and Neck Oncologic and Reconstructive Surgery at Medical University of South Carolina. Dr. Haskins delivers care within our Baylor Medicine practice as well as at Ben Taub General Hospital.



Angela Peng, MD

Dr. Angela Peng joined the Department in the summer of 2019. She completed her Neurotology Fellowship at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Dr. Peng practices within Baylor Medicine and at our public affiliate hospitals, Ben Taub General Hospital and at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.



Sunthosh Sivam, MD

Dr. Sunthosh Sivam joined the Department in the fall of 2019. He completed his Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery Fellowship at the University of Kansas Medical Center in Kansas City. Dr. Sivam practices within Baylor Medicine and at our public affiliate hospitals, Ben Taub General Hospital and at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center. He is the Course Director for the undergraduate medical program.



FACULTY RETIREMENTS



William Brownell, PhD

After a lifetime commitment in the pursuit of knowledge in the field of neuroscience in the Bobby R. Alford Department of Otolaryngology, Dr. William Brownell closed his laboratory at Baylor College of Medicine in January. Dr. Brownell earned his PhD in Physiology at the University of Chicago in 1973. He joined BCM in 1994 where he held a joint appointment in the Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery and Neuroscience. He held the Jake and Nina Kamin Chair of Otorhinolaryngology during his tenure. He was inducted into the Bobby R. Alford Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery Hall of Fame. Dr. Brownell was appointed Professor Emeritus upon his retirement.

LEADERSHIP UPDATES



David Hernandez, MD

Effective February 1, 2020, Dr. David Hernandez was named Chief of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery at Ben Taub General Hospital, Harris Health System (HHS). Dr. Hernandez joined the department in the summer of 2017 as Assistant Professor after completing his Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery residency at Northwestern University in Chicago and fellowship in Head & Neck Surgery and micro-vascular reconstruction at Indiana University, Indianapolis, Indiana. He has focused his clinical activity in the treatment of patients with head and neck cancer at Ben Taub General Hospital and the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center.

David assumed the role of chief of service that Dr. W Douglas Appling so admirably filled since 2016. We are deeply indebted to Dr. Appling for successfully guiding the service during a period of significant changes at Harris Health System that posed serious threats to Baylor's affiliation with the Hospital District. Dr. Appling supervised the move of the ENT Clinic to its first new location in 25 years as well as helped with the opening of new operating rooms that expand our ability to care for patients and educate learners.



Anna Messner, MD, FACS, FAAP

In January 2019, Dr. Anna Messner joined BCM as Professor and the Division Chief for Pediatric Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery at Texas Children's Hospital. Dr. Messner has distinguished herself nationally and internationally as a leader in the field of Pediatric Otolaryngology. Prior to joining TCH she held several leadership titles at Stanford Healthcare including service as Vice Chair of the Department of OHNS (2004 - 2018), Residency Program Director (2002-2018), and Chief of Pediatric Otolaryngology (2013-2018). Her vision for TCH and BCM is to develop the best pediatric otolaryngology program in the nation, offering the highest standards of professionalism, service, clinical care, research, education and quality improvement.



Krista Olson, MD, FACS (BCM Class 1997/Resident Class 2003)

Effective July 1, 2019, Dr. Krista Olson was named Program Director of the Bobby R. Alford Department of Otolaryngology residency program. Prior to this position Dr. Olson served as the Associate Program Director for the residency program for the last five years.

FACULTY UPDATES



LEADERSHIP UPDATES CONT.



K. Kelly Gallagher, MD, FACS *(BCM Class 2007)*

Effective July 1, 2019, Dr. Kelly Gallagher was named Associate Program Director of the Bobby R. Alford Department of Otolaryngology residency program. Prior to this position Dr. Gallagher was the Course Director for the Selective and Elective undergraduate medical education program for the last several years.



Alex Sweeney, MD *(BCM Class 2008/Resident Class 2013)*

Effective January 1, 2019, Dr. Alex Sweeney was name Director of the Hearing and Balance Center as well as Fellowship Director of the Neurotology/Otology Fellowship in the Bobby R. Alford Department of Otolaryngology.



EDUCATIONAL UPDATES



Despite the added burdens that the COVID-19 pandemic creates, activities in education and research continue at a strong pace. Adding to the regular commitments of faculty, residents and staff this time of year we are onboarding new residents.

The clinical experience of the educational program remains unparalleled as new clinical rotations serve to broaden the clinical and surgical experiences of our residents. The intern class experiences early surgical exposure in pediatric otolaryngology at Texas Children's Hospital. Resident rotations at Baylor St. Luke's Medical Center increased at the beginning of the academic year and serves as BCM's primary private adult teaching hospital with in-depth exposure to general otolaryngology, head and neck oncologic surgery, skull base surgery, otology, and laryngology

We are pleased to introduce the new resident class of 2025:



Caitlin Coviello
University of Miami,
MD, MBA Florida
State University B.S.
Exercise Science



Ari Schuman
University of
Michigan, MD
Columbia
University, B.A. Art
History



Thomas Valente
Medical University of
South Carolina, MD
Presbyterian
College, B.S.
Mathematics



David Wilde
Baylor College of
Medicine, MD
University of Miami,
B.A. Microbiology
and Immunology



Christopher Weeks
University of
Alabama, MD
Auburn University,
B.S. Biomedical
Sciences

We are pleased to send off our graduating residents and we wish them well:



Diane Chen, MD
(BCM Class of 2015)
2020 Head & Neck
Fellowship, Indiana
University, Indiana
2021 Pediatric
Fellowship, Lurie's
Children Hospital,
Chicago, IL



Tanner Fullmer, MD
2020 Head & Neck
Fellowship, MD
Anderson Cancer
Center, Houston



Meha Fox, MD
(BCM Class of 2015)
2020 Rhinology &
Anterior Skull Base
Surgery Fellowship,
University of Kansas



Kate O'Connor, MD
2020 Facial Plastic
Reconstructive
Fellowship, New
York Center Facial
Plastic Laser
Surgery under
Dr. A. Jacono



Paul Wilson, MD
2020 Private
Practice Lafayette,
IN

NEW RESEARCH GRANT AWARDS

VLAD SANDULACHE, MD, PHD



VA Career Development Award

Title: Improving treatment algorithms for Veterans with oropharyngeal cancer

Total Award: \$970,185

Duration: 3-years

Dr. Vlad Sandulache recently was named the recipient of a VA Career Development Award from the Department of Veteran's Affairs Clinical Science Research, which provides substantial support for him to expand his work in basic and clinical head and neck cancer research. The main goal of the grant will be to identify the interaction between intrinsic tumor biology, the tumor immune microenvironment and treatment response in aggressive oropharyngeal cancer.

R03

Title: Overcoming cisplatin resistance by targeting fatty acid metabolism

Total BCM Award: \$333,872

Duration: 2-years

Targeting of tumor metabolism represents a unique opportunity to improve the effectiveness of chemotherapy for advanced oral cancers. In this project, we aim to develop a metabolic targeting strategy based on changes in fatty acid metabolism related to mutation of the TP53 gene. Completion of this R03 project will allow us to develop more effective targeting approaches for aggressive, chemotherapy-resistant cancers in the decades to come.

ALEX SWEENEY, MD



Unrestricted Private Educational Grant From Advanced Bionics Corporation

Title: Multicenter Assessment of Electrode Placement and Audiologic Outcomes in Cochlear Implantation with the Advanced Bionics HiFocus™ L23 Electrode

Total BCM Award: \$36,894

Dr. Alex Sweeney received an unrestricted education research grant from Advanced Bionics Corp. The Technical Title of Project – Multicenter Assessment of Electrode Placement and Audiologic Outcomes in Cochlear Implantation with the Advanced Bionics HiFocus™ L23 Electrode

MITCHELL FREDERICK, PHD



CPRIT Award

Title: Targeting Alterations of the NOTCH1 Pathway in Head & Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma (HNSCC)

Total BCM Award: \$236,840

Duration: 3-years



In collaboration with MD Anderson Cancer Center (Dr. Faye Johnson), Dr. Mitchell Frederick received this 3-year CPRIT award investigating Head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC). Notably, for HNSCC, most of the cancer-causing mutations are in tumor suppressor genes that are very difficult to target with drugs. Unlike some other cancers, there are no good therapies to specifically target alterations in HNSCC in a personalized manner. NOTCH1 is a tumor suppressor gene frequently mutated in HNSCC. The project team recently discovered that HNSCC tumors with NOTCH1 mutations die when treated with drugs that inhibit a cellular enzyme known as PBK. Fortunately, several drugs to inhibit PBK exist and we have shown in the laboratory that these drugs kill HNSCC tumors with NOTCH1 mutations. In this project, the research team propose experiments to understand the dependency of NOTCH1-mutant HNSCC on the PBK pathway, and models to optimize targeting this pathway in NOTCH1-mutant HNSCC to overcome mechanisms of drug resistance. In addition, we will leverage human clinical specimens from an ongoing clinical trial of a PI3K inhibitor in HNSCC to confirm molecular markers predictive of drug response.

R01 Award

Title: Targeting Alterations of the NOTCH1 Pathway in Head & Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma (HNSCC)

Duration: 5-years

Total BCM Award: \$1,151,692

Working with MD Anderson Cancer Center (Dr. Faye Johnson), this award sets out to examine that the identification of gene mutations in head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC) has not resulted in any changes in clinical care or patient outcomes, and the overall survival rate for this cancer has been relatively static for the past three decades. To address this problem, the project team showed that HNSCC cell lines harboring mutations in a gene called NOTCH1 die when exposed to inhibitors of a cellular survival pathway called PI3K/mTOR. In this award the team will: (1) conduct a clinical trial of NOTCH1-mutant HNSCC treated with an inhibitor of PI3K/mTOR, (2) determine the molecular mechanism that underlies tumor cell death following inhibition of PI3K/mTOR, and (3) identify combinations of drugs that maximize killing and prevent resistance in NOTCH1-mutant HNSCC.

HELEN COHEN, EDD, OTR, FAOTA



R01 Supplemental Award

Title: Epidemiologic research on screening for vestibular and balance disorders: supplement for people with Alzheimer's disease

Total BCM Award: \$216,736

Duration: 1-year

This pilot study, using 60 subjects from one clinic, will be the first to test Alzheimer's disease (AD) patients directly on a thorough battery of standard, objective diagnostic tests of the vestibular system (ENG). Subjects will be patients with mild to moderate AD. This study will estimate the prevalence of vestibular disorders in AD and compare their performance to that of healthy controls in the parent study who will have been tested on the same test battery. Therefore, we will be able to determine if the prevalence differs from age-matched controls. This study uses clinical data to determine if severity of cognitive impairment or reduced hippocampal volume on MRI are related to increased prevalence of vestibular impairment.

APPOINTMENTS



Daniel Chelius MD

Dr. Daniel Chelius was chosen as Annual Meeting Program Coordinator-elect by the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Board of Directors. In this role, he will serve a five-year term on the board overseeing the annual meetings from 2020-2024. The meeting draws 7,000-plus attendees annually from more than 80 countries and more than 250 exhibitors.



Richard W. Danielson, PhD

Dr. Dick Danielson was named Co-Chair of the International Space Station's Multilateral Medical Operations Panel's Acoustic Sub-Working Group. Additionally, his Acoustics Sub-Working Group was awarded the 2020 Safe-in-Sound Award Excellence for Innovation in Hearing Loss Prevention at the annual conference of the National Hearing Conservation Association in Destin Florida. The award is a terrific honor for our team, which has representatives from NASA, the Russian Space Agency, the European Space Agency, the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency, and the Canadian Space Agency.



Julina Ongkasuwan, MD, FAAP, FACS

Dr. Ongkasuwan was appointed to serve in the following leadership positions:

- 2020 100th American Bronchoesophagological Association Annual Meeting Program Chair
- 2020 American Academy Otolaryngology Annual Meeting Program Committee Laryngology Lead
- American Academy Otolaryngology Voice Committee Chair
- Current Otorhinolaryngology Reports Section Editor Pediatric Airway and Voice 2020-present
- Laryngoscope American Bronchoesophagological Association Editorial Board Representative 2018-present
- ENT Journal Editorial Board Member. 2019-present



Alex Sweeney, MD

Dr. Sweeney was appointed to serve in the following leadership positions:

- President, Houston Society of Otolaryngology (Houston, TX), 7/2019 - 6/2020
- American Neurotology Society (ANS) Fellowship Committee, 6/2019 - present
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Committee, Baylor College of Medicine (Houston, TX), 6/2020 - present



Tiffany Raynor, MD

TCH Pediatric Faculty has been awarded the Star Faculty Award for Excellence in Patient Care.



Mary Frances Musso, DO

TCH Pediatric Faculty has been awarded the Star Faculty Award for Excellence in Patient Care.



Andrew Huang, MD, FACS

Baylor Medicine faculty has been awarded the Star Faculty Award for Excellence in Patient Care.



Shraddha Mukerji, MD, FACS

TCH Pediatric Faculty has been awarded the Norton Rose Fulbright Excellence in Teaching Award.

AFFILIATED HOSPITAL UPDATES

OTOLARYNGOLOGY HEAD AND NECK SURGERY SECTION, OPERATIVE CARE LINE, MICHAEL E. DEBAKEY VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER

Over the last 12 months, the Oto-HNS service has continued to grow under the overall leadership of Dr. Robert Parke. The service remains the largest and busiest within the national Veterans Health Administration and has surpassed its productivity targets by nearly 2-fold for the last 3 years in a row. With the recent arrival of Dr. Angela Peng, a new Otology-Neurotology Clinic has been created for our Veterans in order to maximize access to subspecialty care. The initiation of the hypoglossal nerve stimulator program for Veterans with obstructive sleep apnea has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic but is expected to resume later in 2020. The service has implemented VA Video Connect telemedicine options and has continued to provide care to our Veteran population through the current pandemic.

The Head and Neck Cancer clinic has continued to expand under Dr. Vlad Sandulache's leadership, with over 150 new cancer patients evaluated and dispositioned through the MEDVAMC Head and Neck Tumor Planning Conference; of these, 34 patients required microvascular free flap reconstruction for their oncologic resection. Dr. David Hernandez has developed and implemented a robust head and neck reconstructive program, with support from the Surgical Intensive Care Unit team, surgical care floors and the invaluable assistance of the MEDVAMC Community Living Center team. A new Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship Clinic has been created within the section in order to optimize care for an ever increasing population of Veteran survivors; this has been supported by the institution through the addition of a 3rd Physician Assistant position to care for and support these patients following completion of their cancer treatment. In collaboration with our colleagues in Speech Pathology, we have implemented the use of the Department of Veterans Affairs Annie mobile application in order to provide intensive swallowing support for patients undergoing treatment for head and neck cancer.



Our tireless VAMC Speech Pathologists, Carol Stach and Madeline Vernese at work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The service has continued to be academically productive throughout the last year. Drs. Andrew Sikora and Vlad Sandulache received dedicated funding from the VA Office of Research and Development and the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research for a Field Based Meeting titled "Innovations in risk-stratification and treatment of Veterans with oropharynx cancer" which was held in May, 2019 at the Baylor College of Medicine. Successful completion of this meeting prompted a VA ORD funded Clinical Trial Planning Meeting held in Washington, DC in September 2019 which has resulted in development of a Clinical Trial Planning group within the VHA in order to support development of novel clinical trials for Veterans with head and neck cancer.



Residents and PAs observe social distancing while caring for Veterans.

OTOLARYNGOLOGY - HEAD AND NECK SURGERY SERVICE AT BEN TAUB HOSPITAL

The Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery Service at Ben Taub Hospital has seen continued growth and expansion of specialty care over the last year. With the addition of Dr. Angela Peng, Otology-Neurotology, we have been able to provide much needed subspecialty care for our patients in the clinic and the operating room. Dr. Sunthosh Sivam, Facial Plastics and Reconstructive Surgery, also joined the team, and has been a very welcome addition given his clinical interest and expertise in the operative management of facial trauma. Drs. Sivam and Hernandez helped design and approve an algorithm for Ophthalmology consults in the setting of facial trauma for the Ben Taub Hospital. Dr. Sivam received approval from hospital leadership for intraoperative CT scans for select facial trauma cases such as orbital floor repairs. Additionally, under the direction of Dr. Sivam, the Otolaryngology facial trauma team is collaborating with the Ophthalmology department to evaluate predictors of ocular trauma in the setting of orbital fractures. Dr. Hernandez is leading the team's efforts to study compliance with maxillomandibular fixation in patients treated for mandibular fractures at Ben Taub to help inform future practices.

The head and neck surgery team gained a valuable member of the team this year, Dr. Angela Haskins. She has allowed for the continued growth and expansion of our head and neck cancer services, and, as the primary microvascular free flap reconstructive surgeon, she provides our team with the opportunity to offer aggressive surgical treatment in a multimodality treatment paradigm. Our team has performed 25 free flaps this year, and we look to expand this practice in the coming academic year. In addition to utilizing microvascular free tissue transfer after oncologic resection, our free flap program offers dynamic facial reconstruction for patients with facial paralysis and mandible reconstruction after severe trauma.

Dr. Applig served as Chief of Service for the last several years, and he continues to be an indispensable resource to the service in addition to a valued educator. Dr. Hernandez transitioned into the role as the new Chief of Service this year and helped facilitate the ever changing clinical landscape during the initial and ongoing stages of the COVID pandemic. The service has been performing telephone visits for select patients and will soon offer video telemedicine visits for patients that would otherwise wait months for an in-person appointment. As always, our team meets challenges with poise and unwavering dedication to our mission.

In March BCM and Harris Health concluded two years of negotiations and signed a new 15 year affiliation agreement ensuring continued excellence in patient care and stability for our educational program for the foreseeable future.

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

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WHO WE ARE BY THE NUMBERS ▼

FACULTY
53
 CLINICAL **46** RESEARCH **7**

RESIDENTS
25

FELLOWS
4

AUDIOLOGISTS
6

ADVANCED PRACTICE PROVIDERS
2

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS
8

POSTDOCTORAL ASSOCIATE
1

PROFESSIONAL STAFF
32

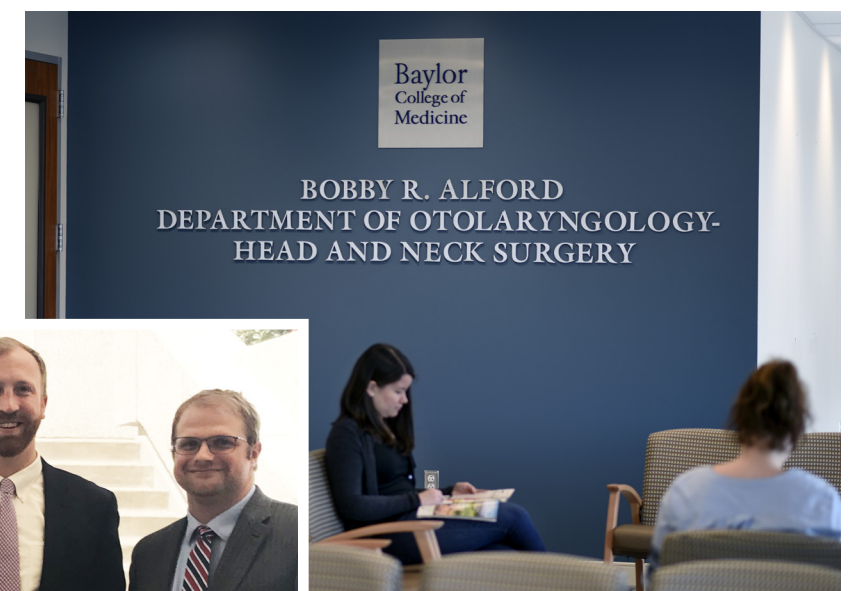


Current Chief Residents:
 From left to right Drs. Nathan Lindquist, Tokunbo Ayeni, Jonathan Choi, Daniel Vinh
 Not pictured: Dr. Sagar Kansara

Graduating Chief Residents:
 From left to right Drs. Kate O'Connor, Meha Fox, Diane Chen, Paul Wilson, Tanner Fullmer



Drs. Laura Schadt and Michaela Stapp fit a patient for a cochlear implant



Waiting room of the Bobby R. Alford Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery clinic

Baylor
College of
Medicine

OTOLARYNGOLOGY
HEAD AND NECK SURGERY

BAYLOR COLLEGE OF MEDICINE MEDICAL CENTER

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APPOINTMENTS

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