



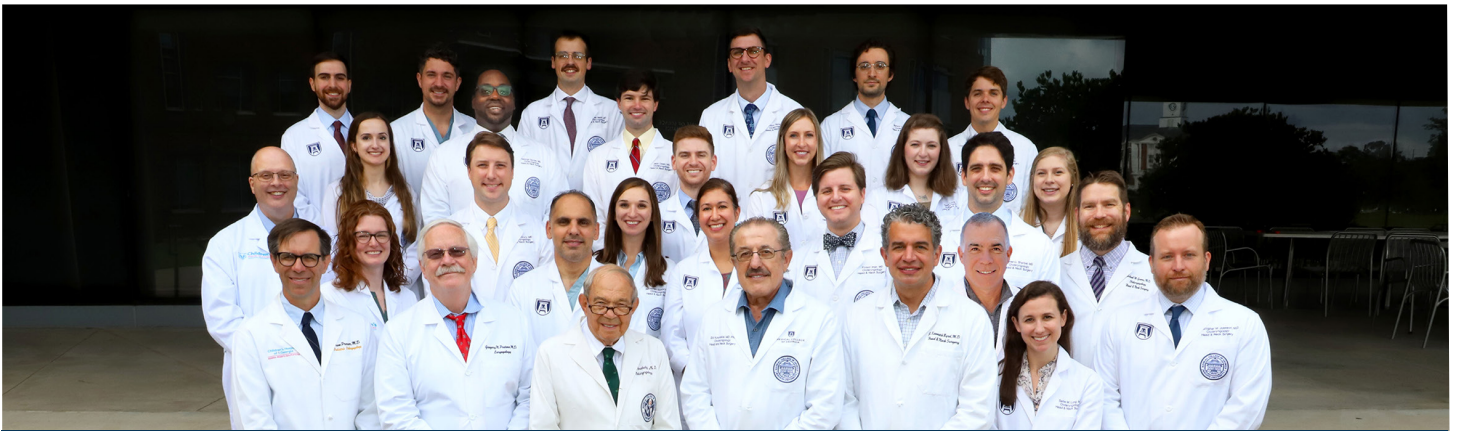
# OBSERVER



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
MEDICAL COLLEGE  
OF GEORGIA

Spring 2026

Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery



## From the Chair

### Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Spring in Augusta always brings a different kind of energy. With the Masters just around the corner, there is a sense of anticipation in the air that feels both familiar and motivating. It is a good reminder of how preparation and tradition shape success, not just in golf, but in the work we do every day.

One highlight in this issue of the OTO Observer is the continued growth of our clinical programs. I'm especially pleased to welcome Dr. Aurora Vincent as Chief of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. She brings outstanding expertise, and I am confident she will strengthen both patient care and resident training.

Education remains one of our greatest strengths. It is encouraging to see our faculty and trainees recognized through teaching awards, national presentations, and impactful research. This year's residency match was particularly exciting, with a record number of Medical College of Georgia students entering otolaryngology. That level of interest speaks to the strength of the program we have built together.

What stands out most, however, is the people. The dedication of our faculty and staff, the enthusiasm of our trainees, and the collaborative spirit across the department are what truly drive our progress.

Thank you for everything you do, whether here in Augusta or as part of our broader community. Your commitment to patient care and to this field is deeply appreciated.

I hope many of you will join us in June for the Porubsky Symposium and Alumni Event. It is always a wonderful opportunity to reconnect, share ideas, and spend time together.

Wishing you all a great spring. I hope you find time to recharge and enjoy the season, perhaps even a bit of golf.

Warm regards,

*Stil Kountakis*



**Stil Kountakis, MD, PhD**  
Edward S. Porubsky, MD Distinguished  
Chair in Otolaryngology;  
Professor and Chair, Department  
of Otolaryngology-Head and  
Neck Surgery

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## FACULTY



## FROM THE EDITOR

**Daniel Sharbel, MD**

### To my colleagues,

Spring is here, and with it comes the anticipation of growth and new beginnings. In that spirit, this edition of the OTO Observer reflects our team's continued pursuit of excellence in our tripartite mission of teaching, patient care, and research.

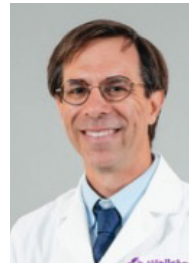
Our commitment to teaching remains one of the defining strengths of the department. The recent recognition of our faculty for excellence in both graduate and undergraduate medical education is meaningful, but more importantly, it reflects the consistency of that effort day to day—in clinic, in the operating room, and in the time invested in our trainees. Our residents and students continue to build on that foundation, with strong scholarly work and national recognition, and we look forward to welcoming another outstanding group of residents this July.

We are also pleased to welcome Dr. Aurora Vincent as Chief of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. The addition of a dedicated facial plastic surgeon brings an important new dimension to the department, expanding patient access for complex reconstructive and aesthetic needs while also strengthening the educational experience for our trainees.

Our Pediatric Otolaryngology division continues to deliver excellent multidisciplinary care while advancing clinical and academic efforts. The recent \$50 million investment in pediatric services at the Children's Hospital of Georgia will further support growth in access, technology, and specialized care for patients across the region.

As always, thank you to our faculty, trainees, staff, and referring colleagues for the work you do every day.

*Daniel Sharbel, MD*



**Drew Prosser, MD**

Prosser: MCG Exemplary Teaching Award Graduate Education 2025



**Gregory Postma, MD**

Named one of Americas Top Doctors for the 23rd consecutive year.



**Daniel Sharbel, MD**

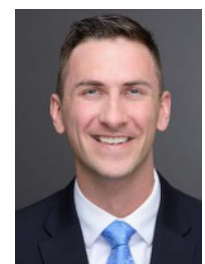
2025 Medical College of Georgia Exemplary Teaching Award in Graduate Medical Education  
2025 Medical College of Georgia Exemplary Teaching Award in Undergraduate Medical Education



**Jason May, MD, PhD**


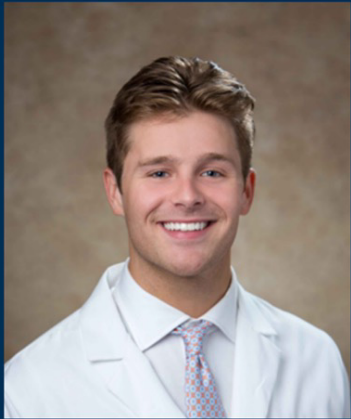
received PhD in Education February 2026.

The Triological Society has awarded our program a \$2,250 travel award to offset expenses associated with the Combined Sections Meeting, held January 22–24, 2026, in Orlando, Florida. This award was granted in recognition of the scholarly contributions of the following members of our department: our medical student **Asim Ahmed, BS** and our residents **Hanna L. K. Long, MD** and **Brandon Tapasak, MD**.



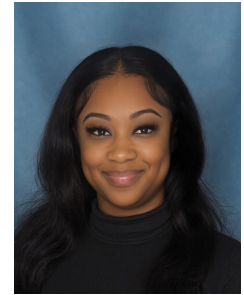
# HAIL *Welcome!*

## RESIDENT MATCH: Joining July 2026



**Dylan Fromm**     **Lindsey Herberger**  
Mercer University School of Medicine  
dylan.c.fromm@live.mercer.edu     University of Arkansas College of Medicine  
lsherberger@uams.edu

## NEW STAFF



**Kayla McElmurray**  
ENT Pediatric Nurse Navigator



**Wouter Ceysens, PA**  
PEDS Advanced Practice Provider

## NEW FACULTY

### Dr. Aurora Vincent

will join us as Chief of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. She brings a unique combination of advanced fellowship training in both facial plastic and reconstructive surgery and head and neck oncologic surgery, having completed dual fellowships under Dr. Yadranko Ducic in Fort Worth, Texas. She completed her otolaryngology residency at Madigan Army Medical Center and earned her medical degree from the Uniformed Services University.



reconstruction, facial reanimation, and oncologic outcomes, with an extensive record of peer-reviewed publications, national presentations, and textbook contributions.

Dr. Vincent is board-certified in both Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery and Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and is an active contributor to national organizations, including the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery and the American Head and Neck Society. Her work has been recognized with numerous teaching, research, and military leadership awards, reflecting her commitment to excellence across all mission areas.

While serving as Chief of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery at Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Dr. Vincent has demonstrated exceptional leadership in clinical operations, education, and program development, including her role as Director of the Transitional Year Residency Program. Her academic interests span complex head and neck

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Vincent to Augusta and look forward to the continued growth of our facial plastic and reconstructive surgery program under her leadership, as well as the impact she will have across our clinical, educational, and research missions.



**Mary Aills**  
Office Associate

# HISTORIC MATCH

The Medical College of Georgia—the state’s largest medical school—is celebrating a landmark achievement in the 2026 Match. This year, MCG recorded the highest number of students in its history matching into Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery.

We are proud to recognize eight exemplary students who will continue their training in seven different states across multiple regions of the country, showcasing the

strength, dedication, and national reach of our program.

Please join us in congratulating these remarkable future otolaryngologists as they embark on the next phase of their careers and continue MCG’s tradition of excellence.

*Congratulations!*



**Asim Ahmed**

Thomas Jefferson University  
Hometown: Columbus, GA



**Humzah Ali**

Emory University  
Hometown: Lilburn, GA



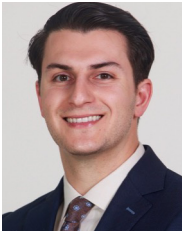
**Osayamen Atekha**

Mount Sinai/New York Eye  
and Ear Infirmary  
Hometown: Statesboro, GA



**Claire Cotton**

UT Southwestern  
Hometown: Atlanta, GA



**Marc Gelernter**

Wake Forest University  
Hometown: Roswell, GA



**Rachel Grimes**

Vanderbilt University  
Hometown: Decatur, GA



**Eric Pan**

University of New Mexico  
Hometown: Cumming, GA



**Raag Patel**

University of Rochester  
Hometown: Lilburn, GA

## PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

### PUBLICATIONS

Prosser JD, Chauhan S. *Impact of COVID-19 on the Incidence of Orbital Cellulitis Admissions: A Comparative Analysis of Circulating Viral Upper Respiratory Infections in the COVID era.* Triological Thesis. *Laryngoscope.* 2025 Nov;135(11):4093-4098.

Chauhan S, Gelernter M, Huynh V, Weir F, Long S, Groves M, Byrd JK, Sharbel D. *Clinicopathologic Factors and Outcomes of Neuroendocrine Carcinoma in the Oropharynx: An Analysis of the National Cancer Database (NCDB).* *Head Neck.* 2025 Nov;47(11):2956-2964.

Vuppala R, Long S, Sharbel D, Weir F. *Survival Impact of Immunotherapy in Advanced Head and Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma: A National Cancer Database Analysis.* *Head Neck.* 2025 Dec. doi: 10.1002/hed.70140. PMID: 41450282

Fassler CA, Krishnapura SG, Sharbel D, Rosenthal E, Netterville J, Mannion K, Langerman A, Sinard R, Rohde S, Topf MC. *Utility of a Novel Mobile Lip-Reading Application for Patients After Total Laryngectomy.* *Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg.* 2026 Jan 4. doi: 10.1002/ohn.70098. PMID: 41485241

Yang Z, Stockton S, Compton E, Butler J, Johnson C, Postma GN. *Prevalence of Esophageal Webs in Patients Undergoing Direct Laryngoscopy.* *Laryngoscope* 2025;135:3594-3599. doi.org/10.1002/lary.32282

Shuman A,... Postma G, Howell R. *Dysphagia Outcomes in Zenker Diverticulum: A Longitudinal POuCH Study.* *Laryngoscope* doi: 10.1002/lary.70052

### POSTERS

#### American Academy of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Foundation Annual Meeting. Indianapolis, IN. Oct 2025

■ Gelernter MC, Sharbel D, Byrd JK. *Granular Cell Tumor of the Pharynx: Management Using a Transoral Robotic Approach.*

#### Trio Sections Meeting, Orlando, FL, January 2026

■ Tapasak B, Vaughn P, Mohammad I, Bigler D, Kountakis SE. *Comparative Outcomes in eCRSwNP: Biologics vs Topical Therapy – Effectiveness and Predictors of Symptom Response.*

■ Beisel B, Long H, Hallauer O, Bhatt A, Mohammad I, Bigler D, Kountakis SE. *Demographic and Comorbidity Associations with Disease Severity and Bony Dehiscence in Allergic Fungal Rhinosinusitis.*

#### North American Skull Base Society, Feb 2026

■ *Reconstruction of Extensive Facial Polytrauma - Collaboration with J Kenneth Byrd, MD (MCG, Otolaryngology, Vice Chairman) patient case: extensive surgical repair of complex craniofacial fractures.*

■ *Orbital Ossifying Fibroma - Collaboration with J Kenneth Byrd, MD (MCG, Otolaryngology, Vice Chairman) on patient case: complex approach to orbital disease.*

■ *Petrous Apex Pseudo-Meningocele - Collaboration with Salman Ali, MD (MCG, Neurosurgery) on patient case: unique anatomy and radiographic presentation.*

■ *Sphenoid Sinus Fungal Ball and Mucocele - Collaboration with Stilianos Kountakis, MD, PhD (MCG, Otolaryngology Chairman) on patient case: combined pathology and extensive skull base erosion.*

### TALKS

Postma: *Visiting Professor Grand Rounds, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA. 31 October 2025*

# CASE REPORT

## USE OF BIOLOGIC AND SYNTHETIC DERMAL MATRICES FOR RECONSTRUCTION OF A COMPLEX SCALP DEFECT WITH EXPOSED DURA

Victoria N. Huynh, BS<sup>1</sup>, Stephen Nash, MD<sup>2</sup>, Sallie Long, MD<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University

<sup>2</sup>Department of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Wellstar MCG Health Medical Center

**Sallie Long, MD**, Assistant Professor, Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery, Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University

### INTRODUCTION

Full-thickness scalp defects in patients with a history of radiation present a challenge for reconstructive surgeons due to limited scalp tissue mobility and a suboptimal healing environment.<sup>1</sup> Acellular dermal matrices are synthetically or biologically derived products with a basement membrane and layer of acellular dermal collagen (or synthetic equivalent) that can serve as a scaffold to promote neovascularization and epithelialization.<sup>2</sup> Examples of these products include ACM Surgical™ Advanced Collagen Matrix (ACM), Novosorb® Biodegradable Temporizing Matrix (BTM) and Integra®. ACM, which comes in both powder and sheet forms, is composed entirely of type I bovine collagen, whereas Integra is a bi-layered sheet with a silicone outer

layer and a porous inner matrix of cross-linked shark glycosaminoglycan and bovine collagen. In contrast, BTM is a fully synthetic matrix that consists of a nonbiodegradable outer polyurethane seal and an inner biodegradable polyurethane matrix.<sup>3</sup> Successful application of these materials in the reconstruction of soft tissue defects and chronic wounds has been documented in the literature.<sup>4</sup> For the scalp specifically, these reports typically describe use on defects above the periosteum or in cases of exposed calvaria.<sup>1,5</sup>

We present a case of reconstruction using these products of a complex scalp defect in a patient with a recurrent cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma.

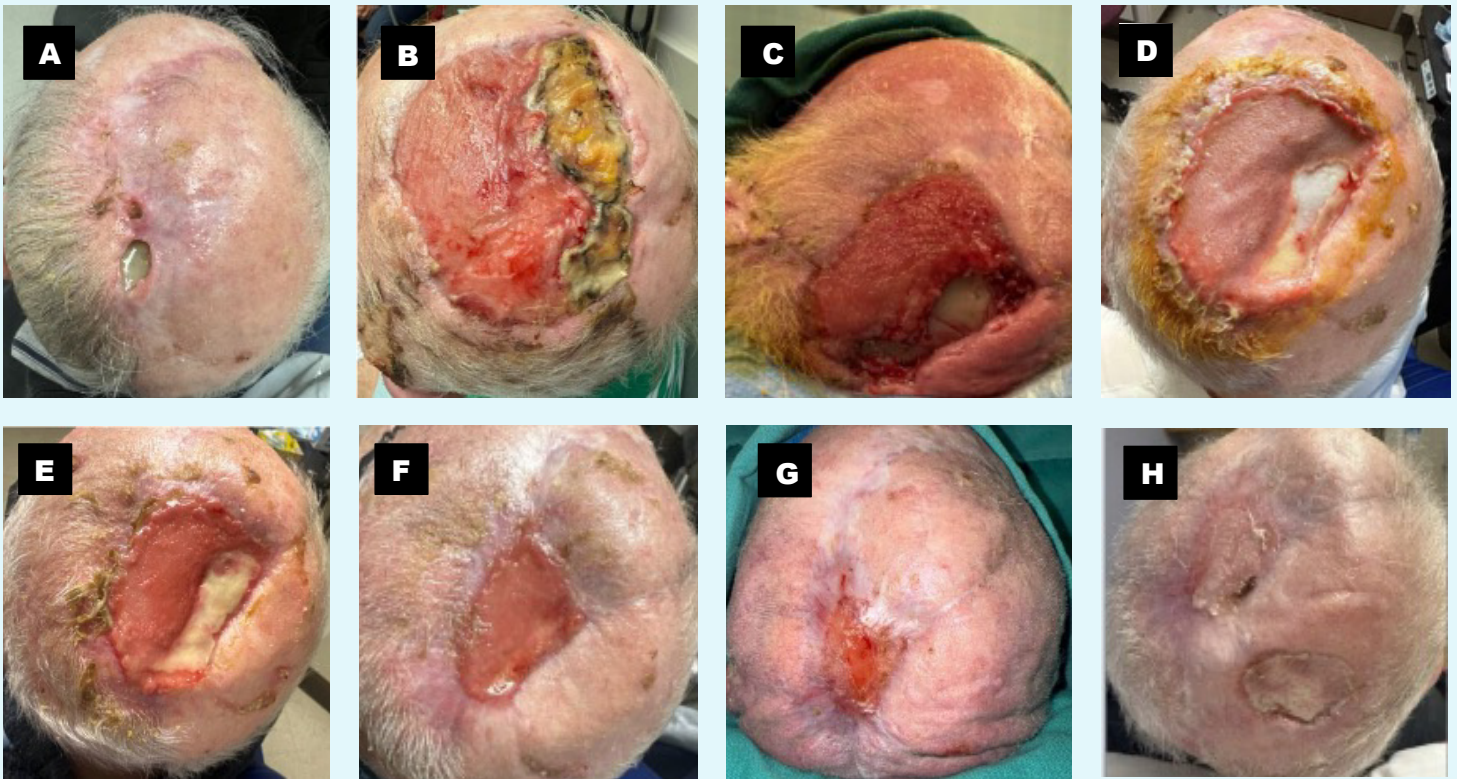
### CASE DESCRIPTION

The patient is a 78-year-old male with a history of cutaneous SCC of the scalp treated with multiple prior procedures including a craniectomy with several local flap reconstructions and radiation. He developed a non-healing wound with exposed dura (Figure 1A) and was referred to the otolaryngology—head and neck surgery service. A craniectomy and latissimus free flap reconstruction was performed in conjunction with neurosurgery however recurrent carcinoma was unable to be cleared at the midline bone margin due to proximity to the sagittal sinus. He was discharged on postoperative day 10 at which time there was no sign of free flap nonviability. Approximately one month after surgery, he was found to have partial flap necrosis with infection (Figure 1B) and was taken to the OR for debridement. Wound cultures grew MRSA, *Enterococcus faecalis*, and *Prevotella*. A portion of the latissimus flap was debrided, leaving 6 cm of dura exposed (Figure 1C). Due to his need for initiation of immunotherapy and active cancer recurrence which likely contrib-

uted to the partial free flap failure, we did not wish to proceed directly with a second free flap reconstruction. A series of synthetic and biologic substitute materials, primarily ACM and BTM, were therefore utilized directly over the dura. He was treated with immunotherapy (cemiplimab) during this time as well as long term antibiotics. The outer layer of BTM was left in place for 7 weeks (Figure 1D) followed by use of ACM and a second placement of BTM in the clinic (Figure 1E). This resulted in complete coverage of his previously exposed dura at approximately 5 months following his original free flap surgery without need for any additional trips to the OR (Figure 1F). A split thickness skin graft was ultimately placed at the time of a wide local excision performed at a separate scalp site for an independent carcinoma that developed while on immunotherapy. At the time of this writing, over one year since his initial presentation, he is currently still healed from a reconstructive perspective with no exposed dura or evidence of infection.

### DISCUSSION

This case is an example that acellular dermal matrices can be used successfully in select scenarios even when placed directly over exposed dura. These materials can be useful in complex scalp reconstruction cases, particularly for patients in whom the goal is avoidance of additional free flap surgery.



**Figure 1**

- (A)** Initial presentation of a non-healing chronic wound with exposed dura
- (B)** One-month postoperative view following craniectomy and latissimus free flap showing partial flap necrosis and infection
- (C)** Immediate postoperative view following partial debridement of the latissimus dorsi flap with approximately 6 cm of exposed dura
- (D)** Seven-week follow up after initial BTM placement; outer layer of BTM was removed, demonstrating healthy granulation tissue and overall decreased area of exposed dura
- (E)** Two-week follow up after initial BTM removal and additional ACM placement; underlying granulation tissue present without evidence of infection and exposed dura covered with second BTM
- (F)** Five months following initial free flap surgery; outer layer of second BTM was removed, showing a healthy layer of granulation tissue over previously exposed dura, with no residual dural exposure
- (G)** Preoperative view before split-thickness skin graft demonstrating continued healing with no exposed dura
- (H)** One-month postoperative view following split-thickness skin graft demonstrating 100% graft take with no dehiscence and no exposed dura

**References**

1. Richardson MA, Lange JP, Jordan JR. Reconstruction of Full-Thickness Scalp Defects Using a Dermal Regeneration Template. *JAMA Facial Plast Surg*. Published online January 21, 2016. doi:10.1001/jamafacial.2015.1731
2. Patel S, Ziai K, Lighthall JG, Walen SG. Biologics and acellular dermal matrices in head and neck reconstruction: A comprehensive review. *Am J Otolaryngol*. 2022;43(1):103233. doi:10.1016/j.amjoto.2021.103233
3. He M, Choi J, Mir I, Al Wahaiby M, Papp A. Integra® versus Novosorb® biodegradable temporizing matrix for burn wounds: a comparative systematic review and meta analysis. *Burns*. 2025;51(9):107754. doi:10.1016/j.burns.2025.107754
4. Kuang B, Pena G, Cowled P, et al. Use of Biodegradable Temporizing Matrix (BTM) in the reconstruction of diabetic foot wounds: A pilot study. *Scars Burns Heal*. 2022;8:20595131221122272. doi:10.1177/20595131221122272
5. Watts V, Attie MD, McClure S. Reconstruction of Complex Full-Thickness Scalp Defects After Dog-Bite Injuries Using Dermal Regeneration Template (Integra): Case Report and Literature Review. *J Oral Maxillofac Surg*. 2019;77(2):338-351. doi:10.1016/j.joms.2018.08.022

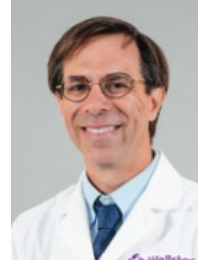
# CLINICAL SPOTLIGHT: Pediatric Otolaryngology

The Pediatric Otolaryngology Division at the Medical College of Georgia/Augusta University and the Wellstar Golisano Children's Hospital of Georgia continues to demonstrate steady growth across its clinical, educational, and academic missions. Over the past year, clinical volumes and operative volumes have continued to grow. Our division surpassed 6,000 annual visits and continues to lead the enterprise in surgical case volume, reflecting both increasing regional demand and the program's expanding surgical capacity and expertise.

Dr. Jason May has played a key role in advancing pediatric otology care since his arrival, with a particular impact on expanding hearing restoration services, pediatric audiology and surgical implant volumes. Dr. Heather Koehn continues to lead our multidisciplinary Cleft and Craniofacial team, with Krystal Oestreich, NP serving as coordinator, providing exemplary care for children with complex conditions. Dr. Koehn also directs the medical student rotation while advising students pursuing careers in otolaryngology, leading a highly successful 2026 match. Dr. Drew Prosser continues to lead the multidisciplinary Aerodigestive team and has worked diligently to offer the most advanced airway diagnostic and therapeutic procedures available anywhere in the world. This team provides the entire spectrum of pediatric otolaryngology care.

The division has also expanded its care team with the addition of Wouter Ceyskens, PA, as a new advanced practice provider, and Kayla McElmurray as a nurse navigator, further enhancing care coordination, and patient experience. In addition, our medical office coordinator Arthur Greene has led significant improvements in patient access and scheduling efficiency, contributing to increased clinical volume and streamlined care delivery. We also celebrate the Golisano family's 50 million dollar contribution to Wellstar Pediatric care, which will further support growth, innovation, and the expansion of pediatric services across the region. This investment will significantly enhance pediatric otolaryngology through expanded access to specialized care, advanced technology, and growth of multidisciplinary programs.

Keeping in line with the broader mission of the Medical College of Georgia, the division remains actively engaged in resident and medical student education while advancing clinical research in the areas of airway reconstruction, pediatric cleft/craniofacial disorders, and hearing restoration. Our division's faculty expertise spans all key subspecialty domains, reflecting a commitment to both innovation and high-quality patient outcomes. We remain committed to our goal of maximal impact through patient care, research productivity, and training of future otolaryngologists, contributing meaningfully to the health of children across Georgia and the Southeast.



**Dr. Drew Prosser**



**Dr. Heather Koehn**



**Dr. Jason May**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

**Head and Neck Cancer Screening** April 17

**Southern States Rhinology Course**  
April 30 - May 2  
Kiawah Island, South Carolina

**Faculty Retreat** May 15

**24th Annual Porubsky Symposium and Alumni Event** June 12-13  
AOEF - Porubsky Symposium ([aoefdtm.org](http://aoefdtm.org))

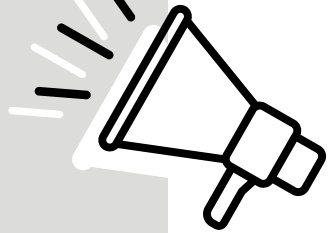


## Otologist/Neurotologist

We are seeking an individual at the Assistant or Associate Professor level with fellowship training in Otolaryngology/Neurotology.  
<https://tinyurl.com/mcgauoto>

## General ENT APP

This role will support our growing clinical services and reflects the department's continued growth and dedication to meeting the needs of our patients and community.  
<https://tinyurl.com/mcgauoto2>



## SOCIAL MEDIA @mcgotolaryngology

is a great opportunity to keep alumni, referring physicians and friends, updated on some of the developments in our department. Over time we will be adding patient education posts as well. We would love to hear from alumni. If you have interesting pictures or stories, please send them to Rachel Elvis at [relvis@augusta.edu](mailto:relvis@augusta.edu).



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
**MEDICAL COLLEGE OF GEORGIA**

Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery



AFFILIATED WITH MEDICAL COLLEGE OF GEORGIA

## APPOINTMENTS:

ADULTS – 762-375-4435

PEDIATRIC – 762-375-0211

ADULT HEAD & NECK CANCER – 706-721-6744

1120 15th Street, BP-4109  
Augusta, GA 30912  
Academic Office: 706-721-6100

Utilize our physician referral tool making it simple for you and your patients – [augustahealth.org/referral](http://augustahealth.org/referral)