Dysphagia Program Hits Full Tilt

Clinical trials, nationally-recognized CME offerings, state-of-the-art patient care, and a brand-new multidisciplinary dysphagia conference – it is safe to say that the MCG Center for Voice and Swallowing Disorders is hitting on all cylinders at the direction of Greg Postma (Director of the Center) and Lori Burkhead (Assistant Professor and Speech Pathologist). Stir in Albert Chang (newly recruited Duke and Cleveland Clinic-trained thoracic surgeon), Robert Schade (Gastroenterology), John Mellinger (Surgery), and Michael Edwards (Surgery) and the ingredients for a world-class dysphagia team are all under one roof. Read more about the latest clinical and investigational efforts of this group inside.

Dr. Lori Burkhead

Dr. Greg Postma

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To learn more about recent events in the department, visit: www.mcg.edu/otolaryngology

Transatlantic Thyroid Telesurgery
(See inside for details)
Message from the Chair

The department recently celebrated its 5-year anniversary, and we are facing new challenges and new opportunities. In addition to the rapid expansion of the Dysphagia program (see pages 1, 5), the Head and Neck Tumor Board continues to grow (see story in this issue), as the institution prepares to break ground on a comprehensive clinical cancer center. Consolidation of the cancer programs promises to improve the efficiency of cancer care delivery, and facilitate our clinical transitional efforts.

David J. Terris, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Porubsky Professor and Chairman

Honors

Gregory Postma was an invited speaker for the American Society of Geriatric Otolaryngology, the Mississippi Society of OHNS, and the ALA, and was visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin and University Hospital in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. He was also named one of America’s Top Doctors for 2007.

Stil Kountakis was elected as President-Elect of the Georgia Society of OHNS, First Vice President of the American Rhinologic Society, and named to Best Doctors in America for 2007.

David Terris received the AAO-HNS Distinguished Service Award, was elected Secretary of the Georgia Society of OHNS, and was visiting professor at UCLA, USC, and Harvard University. He was also named to the list of both America’s Top Doctors and America’s Top Doctors for Cancer for 2007.

Kountakis Book Published

Stil Kountakis, MD, is senior editor of “Rhinologic and Sleep Apnea Surgical Techniques”, the first comprehensive reference book on surgical techniques for the nose, sinuses and sleep apnea. “Instead of having to go multiple places to get information, this book is designed as a contemporary, inclusive reference for residents, otolaryngology fellows and practicing otolaryngologists on surgical indications and techniques, as well as postoperative management,” says Dr. Kountakis. The book has 79 contributors who are leaders in their respective fields.

Three Fellowships Available for 2009-2010

- Endocrine/Head and Neck Surgery (contact Dr. David Terris)
- Rhinology/Sinus Surgery (contact Dr. Stil Kountakis)
- Laryngology (contact Dr. Gregory Postma)
Alumnus William J. Welsh is Awarded the 2007 Lamartine Hardman Cup

Bill Welsh ('79), the first resident to finish the program at MCG, was recently awarded the Lamartine Hardman Cup, the highest award presented annually by the Medical Association of Georgia. The award is presented for achievement that has solved any outstanding problem in public health or made a substantial discovery in the science of surgery or medicine. Dr. Welsh is the inventor of autologous platelet gel, for which he also received the “Excellence in Cosmetic Surgery” award in 2000. Dr. Welsh maintains a clinical faculty position and graciously provides a very popular rotation for the residents.

Where are They Now? John P. Bent, III

John P. Bent, III ('94), has recently returned to full-time academic medicine at Albert Einstein School of Medicine. He is primarily at Children’s Hospital at Montefiore and holds the rank of Associate Professor in the Departments of Otolaryngology and Pediatrics. Dr. Bent has had a productive academic career, and has received multiple honors including the Seymour R. Cohen Award, and the William P. Potsic Basic Sciences Research Award.

First Faculty-Resident Paintball Contest

Pictured at left are the women warriors who distinguished themselves during the first faculty-resident paintball contest. The faculty put on their game faces (see Lori Burkhead in combat helmet) and slightly edged the determined residents. Most valuable players were Creighton Vaught for the resident team, and Subinoy Das for the faculty.
Research Grants Awarded

Subinoy Das was the recipient of a 2007 NIH Clinical Research Loan Repayment Program Grant sponsored by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

Paul Weinberger was awarded the American Association for Cancer Research AFLAC Scholar-In-Training award for his research on protein expression profiling in thyroid cancer.

Publications


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Gifts are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law. MCG fiscal year runs July 1 to June 30. For more information, call 706-721-6100 or visit www.mcg.edu/giving.
The comprehensive Head and Neck Tumor Board continues to attract world-class talent, benefiting the citizens of Georgia and the Southeast. John Greskovich (newly recruited Chief of Radiation Oncology, most recently at Case Western) arrived in July. Hadyn Williams (Chief of Nuclear Medicine) now participates on a regular basis, a reflection of the increasingly important role of PET and PET-CT scans in the management of patients with head and neck cancer. Finally, Scott DeRossi (Chief of Oral Health & Diagnostic Sciences and newly recruited from University of Pennsylvania) represents an anchor in the School of Dentistry, and brings vital knowledge and expertise.

The Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery conducted a thyroid cancer screening day in recognition of Thyroid Cancer Awareness month (September). As part of the MCG Thyroid/Parathyroid Center’s efforts to improve early detection of thyroid malignancy, thyroid screenings including ultrasound evaluation were provided free of charge to the community.

MCG had the distinction of being the site of the very first Focus thyroidectomy performed in the world, followed soon thereafter by Paolo Miccoli (Pisa) and Thierry Defechereaux (Belgium), both of whom will be involved in the spring Thyroid Symposium (see related article in this issue). The Focus device, produced by Ethicon Endo-Surgery, is the first ultrasonic handpiece designed specifically for thyroid surgery and other head and neck procedures.

The Staff Highlights:

Donald Jones, RN, BSN, (senior staff nurse in the adult OR) earned the CNOR certification. Achieving a CNOR credential demonstrates proficiency in support of quality patient care and sets a standard of commitment to the profession of operating room nursing.
Transatlantic Thyroid Telesurgery

In yet another first for the thyroid program, the spring symposium will feature live telesurgery broadcasts from Pisa, Italy. Paolo Miccoli will moderate from Augusta as his partner, Piero Berti, performs an endoscopic thyroidectomy and an endoscopic parathyroidectomy. The 6th consecutive thyroid course will feature a world-class faculty and promises to be another robust educational offering. Other upcoming CME events include the first Facial Plastics Symposium, the first Dysphagia conference targeted at SLPs, and the annual Temporal Bone Conference featuring Rick Pillsbury.

Multidisciplinary Dysphagia Conference

In order to enhance our ability to care for patients with complex swallowing and aspiration difficulties, a multi-departmental dysphagia conference has been started at MCG. Individuals with challenging swallowing problems are discussed, and evaluation and treatment options are reviewed at length. This “full service” approach brings together the disciplines of Otolaryngology, Speech/Language Pathology, Gastroenterology, Gastrointestinal and Thoracic Surgery, as well as selected other subspecialties such as Pediatrics and Neurology. Not only do patients benefit from the experience and expertise of a wide variety of health care specialists but this also brings together a wide battery of sophisticated diagnostic and treatment tools available at few centers.

The diagnostic options at our center include:
- laryngovideostroboscopy
- acoustic and spectroscopic voice analysis by a PhD voice scientist
- laryngeal and pharyngeal electromyography
- fiberoptic endoscopic evaluation of swallowing with and without sensory testing.
- unsedated transnasal esophagoscopy
- high resolution esophageal and pharyngeal manometry
- prolonged ambulatory pH (acid) testing for esophageal and extraesophageal reflux
- videofluoroscopy

Treatment modalities at the Center are also on the cutting edge. Dr. Postma is a pioneer in the area of in-office surgery, which includes unsedated laser treatment of laryngeal and esophageal disorders using two different types of in-office lasers, unsedated dilation of throat, esophagus and trachea scar tissue under topical anesthesia as well as the injection of Botox or other materials into muscles of the larynx, pharynx, and esophagus to improve voice and swallowing. Benefits of in-office procedures include greater safety, decreased costs, and a strong patient preference.

Dr. Burkhead incorporates technology such as biofeedback with surface electromyography (sEMG), manometry and sEMG-triggered neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES) into treatment to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of treatment.

There is no “one size fits all” management algorithm for individuals with swallowing or voice problems. The team approach to swallowing disorders with sophisticated diagnostic testing and targeted treatment allows a rapid evaluation and targeted treatment for individuals suffering from these disorders.
Transcutaneous neuromuscular electrical stimulation (NMES) is an exercise modality that has long been used by physical therapists, occupational therapists and athletic trainers to improve movement performance. Its use in dysphagia rehabilitation has received increasing attention over the past several years, with growing enthusiasm. NMES should be used to augment intensive, task-specific exercise and not as a substitute for targeted exercise treatments.

Following this model for the use of NMES, we have witnessed a number of impressive outcomes. Recently, a 60 year-old man was referred to our Center as a “last resort” with a goal to resume at least some sort of oral intake. He had a left lateral medullary stroke in July 2006. After nearly a year of traditional dysphagia therapy with a speech-language pathologist, he remained PEG dependent. We developed an intensive exercise program tailored to address his specific impairments identified on a modified barium swallow study (MBSS). He was instructed in these exercises using surface electromyography (sEMG) biofeedback to insure he was performing them properly and to his greatest capacity. NMES was added to the regimen. At the end of 6 weeks, an MBSS revealed that this gentleman had a functional swallow without penetration or aspiration. He was not only able to manage his own secretions but he was also able to resume an unrestricted oral diet and have his PEG removed. Currently, he enjoys meals at home as well as in restaurants and at family gatherings, exponentially improving the quality of life of all involved.

Cases like this have prompted us to develop research to help distinguish the cases in which NMES may be of benefit. In the meantime, we view NMES as an emerging technique that may have some value in the armamentarium for the dysphagia clinician. Just as in physical therapy, occupational therapy and athletic training, there may be selected instances in which NMES can be of benefit in conjunction with task-specific, intense exercise.
Minimally Invasive Surgical Management of Thyroid and Parathyroid Disorders

April 18-19, 2008
Augusta, Georgia

Paolo Miccoli, M.D.
University of Pisa, Pisa, Italy

James I. Cohen, M.D., Ph.D.
Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, OR

Thierry Defechereux, M.D., Ph.D.
University of Liege, Belgium

Richard T. Kloo, M.D.
Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

Larry M. Kohse, M.D.
Macon, GA

Laurie A. Loevner, M.D.
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

Gregory W. Randolph, M.D.
Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA

Mark L. Urken, M.D.
Beth Israel Medical Center, New York, NY

Program Chair
David J. Terris, M.D.
Medical College of Georgia

Register early. Participation in the Lab is limited.

Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
Faculty and Areas of Interest

David J. Terris, MD, Chairman
Thyroid and Parathyroid Surgery

Stilianos Kountakis, MD, Vice Chairman
Rhinology and Sinus Surgery

Lori M. Burkhead, PhD, CCC-SLP
Speech Language Pathology

Achih H. Chen, MD
Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

Subinoy Das, MD
Rhinology and Sinus Surgery

Frederick N. Klippert, MD
General Otolaryngology

Brian J. McKinnon, MD, MBA
Otolaryngology and Neurotology

Edward S. Porubsky, MD
General Otolaryngology

Gregory N. Postma, MD
Laryngology and Swallowing Disorders