

## President's Message



I hope that everyone had a great holiday break and a happy New Year! It was truly a pleasure to see so many of you at our Winter meeting at the Ritz Carlton, Lake Oconee. Attendance at the meeting was great and I want to thank our Keynote speakers, Dr. David Kennedy and Dr. Elina Toskala, for their fantastic lectures. I also want to thank Dr. Eric Applebaum with the Metro Atlanta Educational Society for Otolaryngology for his help organizing the conference and agenda. As the calendar turns to 2025, our heads turn to the GSO Summer meeting, held this year at the Cloister in Sea Island, Georgia. Anyone who has attended a meeting or visited this world class resort will tell you, this venue is second to none and a meeting that you don't want to miss! This year we have a great slate of speakers covering up-to-date treatments of a variety of conditions ranging from OSA and difficult airways to common head and neck tumors. I am certain that you will find the content applicable to your daily practice. In addition to the great talks, there will be ample time to play a round of golf, hit the beach or pool and catch up with old friends and colleagues from around the state.

As you flip through this newsletter, please take a moment to read the program updates to see the great work being done at our state's Otolaryngology training programs as well as the member spotlight featuring Drs. Keith and Thomas Holmes from Macon. If you see them at the Summer meeting, make sure to say hello. Lastly please encourage your practice partners and colleagues to join the GSO if they are not members already. I truly believe that the camaraderie with physicians around the state, family friendly meetings at amazing locations, and affordable, relevant CME make membership in the GSO a must for any Otolaryngologist in Georgia. Thank you again for taking the time to read the Georgia ENTertainer. See you at the Cloister!

Sincerely,  
J. Drew Prosser, MD

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## BOG Update



Now more than ever, your advocacy is essential to ensuring a sustainable future for otolaryngology-head and neck surgery and the patients we serve. In 2024, our AAO-HNS ENT PAC recorded its best year ever since 2018, an indication that our members recognize the need for action and involvement in advocacy.

One way to stay informed about issues impacting our specialty is to download the ENTConnect App from the Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery site ([www.entnet.org](http://www.entnet.org)). This year the bipartisan Medicare Patient Access and Practice Stabilization Act (H.R. 879) was introduced in order to reverse the 2.83% Medicare payment cut that took +practices and protect patient access to care. This past month, Cristina Baldassari, BOG Chair encouraged all members to take action and contact your U.S. Representative to cosponsor H.R. 879. ENTConnect provides a simple link to your U.S. Representative based on your business address and it only takes a few minutes to do. The top State Legislative Priorities that your academy representatives are currently focusing on include Scope of Practice, Prior Authorizations, Medical Liability Reform, Hearing Aid Services, Infant Newborn Screening for CMV and Truth in Advertising.

Here in Georgia, our Legislators are working on bill HB 24 that will increase the tax rate on consumable vapor products and tobacco products. Georgia passed SB 131 on 2/27/25 establishing a Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce and Georgia Health Care Professionals Data System. SR 104 recognized February 10, 2025 as Georgia Hearing Day at the state capitol. In progress is SB 162, a bill to implement an automated Georgia Composite Medical Board credentialing system for healthcare providers in this state.

Within the Georgia Society of Otolaryngology, I am available to communicate and help coordinate advocacy needs for any of our GSO members. I can be reached at [eshaw@entofga.com](mailto:eshaw@entofga.com). We are also fortunate to have the following additional BOG representatives for the GSO:

BOG Legislative Rep Kaelyn Krook, MD Atlanta GA

BOG Socio-Economic Rep Brian Boyce MD Atlanta GA

AAO/HNS Director at Large Privat Practice Rep Malaika Witter Hewitt MD

Get involved and contact us if you need our help,

Elizabeth Shaw

Governor, BOG rep for the GSO





AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY  
**MEDICAL COLLEGE  
OF GEORGIA**

Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery



*From the Chair's Desk:*

**Dr. Still Kountakis, MD, Ph.D.**

Edward S. Porubsky, MD Distinguished Chair in Otolaryngology  
Professor and Chair, Department of Otolaryngology-Head and  
Neck Surgery  
Medical College of Georgia - Augusta University

Dear Fellow Georgia Otolaryngologists,

I am proud to share the latest updates from our department, highlighting the remarkable achievements and continued growth of our team. Our faculty members have received prestigious recognitions, reflecting their dedication to excellence in patient care, research, and education. We are thrilled to welcome new faculty who bring exceptional expertise and enthusiasm to our department.

Construction of the Wellstar Columbia County Medical Center is progressing ahead of schedule, promising expanded opportunities for patient care and collaboration. We are excited about the future impact this facility will have on our community.

As always, I am grateful for the hard work and commitment of our faculty, staff, and trainees. Together, we continue to advance our mission of excellence in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery.

Excitement is building in Augusta as the Masters Tournament approaches, bringing energy and anticipation to our city. We look forward to this special time of year and the vibrancy it brings to our community.

"No matter how cold the end of winter, spring is just a breath away." Ancient Greek Proverb

Sincerely,

*Stil Kountakis, MD, PhD*



## Faculty Accomplishments & Presentations



### **David J. Terris, MD, FACS, FACEP**

Dr. David Terris was honored as the guest of honor at the Southern Section meeting of The Triological Society, January 2025 in Orlando, FL. This prestigious recognition highlights his significant contributions to the field and his esteemed reputation among his peers.



### **Gregory Postma, MD**

Dr. Gregory Postma was recognized as one of America's Top Doctors for the 23rd consecutive year. This remarkable achievement underscores his consistent dedication to excellence in patient care and his outstanding expertise in laryngology and swallowing disorders.



### **J. Drew Prosser, MD**

Dr. J. Drew Prosser's thesis was officially accepted by The Triological Society. This significant accomplishment reflects his dedication to advancing medical knowledge and his commitment to scholarly excellence. He will be inducted as a fellow of the society at COSM, New Orleans, LA, May 15-18, 2025. In addition, Dr. Prosser, who serves as the Chief of the Division of Pediatric Otolaryngology, has been promoted to the rank of Full Professor, with this advancement becoming effective on July 1, 2025. This prestigious promotion is a testament to his exceptional leadership, dedication to medical education, and significant contributions to the field of pediatric otolaryngology.



### **Jason May, MD**

Dr. Jason May's thesis was approved by The Triological Society. This noteworthy achievement demonstrates his commitment to advancing medical research and his dedication to academic excellence. He will be inducted as a fellow of the society at COSM, New Orleans, LA, May 15-18, 2025.



### **Heather Koehn, MD**

Dr. Heather Koehn, of the Division of Pediatric Otolaryngology, was promoted early to Associate Professor, effective July 1, 2025. She is renowned for her expertise in Cleft Lip and Palate/Craniofacial Reconstruction and serves as the Co-Director of the center. This well-earned promotion reflects her exceptional skill, leadership, and contributions to her field. Her dedication to advancing pediatric care continues to impact patients and the medical community.



## Recruitment



### Sallie Long, MD

We are excited to announce that Dr. Sallie Long has joined our department as of August 2024. Dr. Long completed her residency in Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery at Cornell and went on to pursue a fellowship in Head and Neck-Microvascular Surgery at the University of Miami. She brings outstanding expertise in complex head and neck reconstruction and has an impressive background in research, with numerous peer-reviewed publications and textbook chapters. Her commitment to patient care and surgical excellence makes her a fantastic addition to our team. We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Long and look forward to the impact she will make in our department.



### Diana Bigler, MD

Dr. Diana Bigler will complete her fellowship in Rhinology-Advanced Sinus and Skull Base Surgery on June 30, 2025. Following this achievement, she will join our department as an Assistant Professor in the Division of Rhinology. Her advanced training and expertise will be invaluable to our team and patients. We look forward to her contributions and leadership in the field.



### Emad Al Haj Ali, MD

We are excited to announce that Dr. Emad Al Haj Ali will be rejoining our department on May 1st as a General ENT and Sleep Apnea Surgeon. Dr. Al Haj Ali is well known to us, and we are thrilled to have him back on our team. He brings a wealth of experience, having completed a Head and Neck Surgery Fellowship and an Endocrine Surgery Fellowship at Augusta University. In addition, he has extensive training in Rhinology and Endoscopic Sinus Surgery from St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Boston. Dr. Al Haj Ali's expertise in General ENT and Sleep Apnea Surgery, combined with his dedication to patient care, makes him an invaluable addition to our team. We look forward to welcoming him back and are excited about the impact he will make on our patients and community.

## Wellstar MCG Health New Facility: Wellstar MCG Columbia County Hospital

Construction of the 100-bed Wellstar Columbia County Medical Center in Grovetown, Georgia, is well underway and progressing ahead of schedule. The facility is set to welcome its first patients in August 2026.

The project, which began in April 2024, has already surpassed the halfway mark, with more than 50% of construction completed as of December 2024. The 250,000-square-foot hospital will include an emergency department designed to function as a Level II trauma center, as well as state-of-the-art surgical facilities with operating rooms, catheterization labs, interventional radiology, and endoscopy suites.





Additionally, a 90,000-square-foot medical office building will be located next to the hospital, offering primary care, women's health, and various specialty services.

Despite minor setbacks from Hurricane Helene in September 2024, which caused temporary power outages and minimal damage, the construction remains on track. The medical center's strategic location near Interstate 20 will enhance accessibility for residents of Columbia County and surrounding areas, meeting the growing healthcare needs of the community.



## Otolaryngology-HNS Recent Publications

Acree L, Compton E, **Byrd K, Johnson C, Postma GN**: Intractable Aspiration Treated with Laryngectomy After SLAD-R Surgery: A Case Report. *Laryngoscope* 134:4582-4584, 2024.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/lary.31510>

Brown J, ... **Postma G**, Howell R: Surgical Nonresponders in Zenker Diverticulum and Lower Esophageal Pathology (POuCH Collaborative) *Laryngoscope*, 134:4897-4902, 2024. Doi:10.1002/lary.31619

Wandell GM, Swartwood JG, Brar AS, **Postma G**, Belafsky PC: Safety of a Novel Upper Esophageal Sphincter Balloon Dilator. *The Laryngoscope*, 135:66-72, 2025. doi.org/10.1002/lary.31634



## Faculty Positions

**Otologist/Neurotologist:** We are seeking an individual at the Assistant or Associate Professor level with fellowship training in Otology/Neurotology. This is a full-time position at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University and Wellstar MCG Health. Excellent resources are available and rank is commensurate with experience.

**Rhinologist:** We are seeking an individual at the Assistant or Associate Professor level with fellowship training in Rhinology, Sinus, and Skull Base Surgery. This is a full-time position at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University and Wellstar MCG Health. Excellent resources are available and rank is commensurate with experience.

*To apply and receive additional information, please send a curriculum vitae to Dr. Stil Kountakis at [skountakis@augusta.edu](mailto:skountakis@augusta.edu).*



## MCG Otolaryngology Social Media

The department has continued to establish a social media presence on Instagram and Facebook. We have found that this 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. Our current sites can be reached at @mcgotolaryngology. We would love to hear from alumni. If you have interesting pictures or stories, please send them to Brittany Frazier at [brifrazier@augusta.edu](mailto:brifrazier@augusta.edu).



### Upcoming Educational Events

April 24-26, 2025

Southern States Rhinology Symposium

Kiawah Island, South Carolina

[www.southernstatesrhinology.org](http://www.southernstatesrhinology.org)

June 13- 14, 2025

Annual Porubsky Symposium and Alumni  
Event

Augusta, Georgia

[AOEF - Porubsky Symposium \(aoefdtn.org\)](http://aoefdtn.org)

*To make an appointment for your patient, please call:*

Adults - 762-375-4435

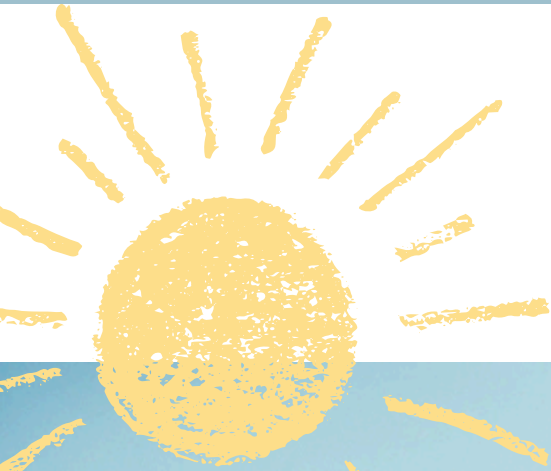
Pediatric - 762-375-0211

Adult Head & Neck Cancer - 706-721-6744

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

Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery  
Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University  
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Augusta, GA 30912  
Academic Office: 706-721-6100





# GSO HNS

The Georgia Society of  
Otolaryngology/Head & Neck Surgery

*Register Now!* 

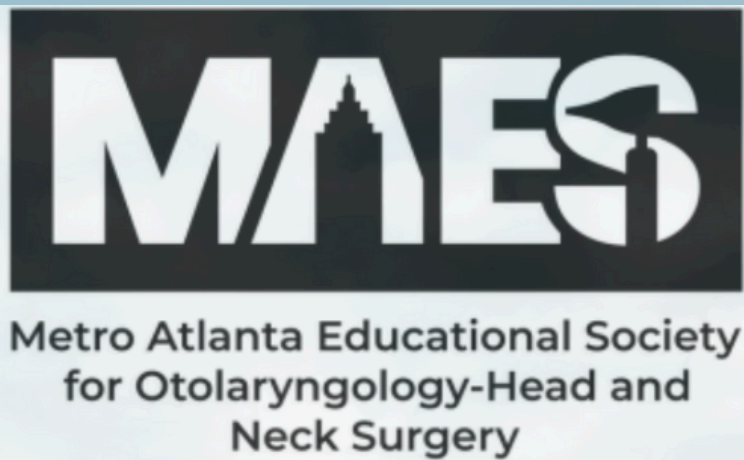


**2025 Annual  
Summer  
Meeting**

**JUNE 26 - 29, 2025**

**THE CLOISTER  
SEA ISLAND, GA**





***Save The Date!***



**GSO/HNS & MAESO SCIENTIFIC ASSEMBLY**

**DECEMBER 6 - 7, 2025**

**THE RITZ-CARLTON REYNOLDS, LAKE OCONEE**





# GSO/HNS Member Spotlight: Dr. Thomas Holmes & Dr. Keith Holmes



Dr. Thomas Holmes was born and raised in Macon, GA. He earned his BS from Mercer University while being a member of the division I men's golf team. He then received his MD from the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University. Following medical school, he stayed in Augusta where he completed his Otolaryngology residency at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University. He moved back to Macon, GA and joined his father at the ENT Center of Central Georgia following residency. He is excited to offer comprehensive Otolaryngology care to Central Georgia. His interests include head & neck cancer and pediatrics.

Thomas is married to his wife of almost 10 years, Hannah, and has three girls (Maggie- 6, Emmie- 4, and Elizabeth- 1). Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with family, traveling, playing golf, and cheering on the Mercer Bears and Atlanta Braves. Dr. Holmes joined the Georgia Society of Otolaryngology to support and network with fellow Otolaryngologists and to stay current with best practices/techniques.




Dr. Keith Holmes was born and raised in Sandersville, GA. He earned his BS from Mercer University while being a member of the division I men's golf team. He then received his MD from the Medical College of Georgia. Following medical school, he completed his Otolaryngology residency at Wake Forest University in Winston Salem, NC. He joined the ENT Center of Central Georgia where he worked until his retirement in December 2023. One of his greatest joys was working with his son, Thomas.

Keith is married to his wife Tricia. They have two children both in Medicine (David- OB/GYN, Thomas- ENT). He has four grandchildren. He enjoys playing golf, traveling, and playing with his grandchildren. In addition, he highly recommends retirement but misses the practice of Otolaryngology. Dr. Holmes joined the Georgia Society of Otolaryngology to connect with fellow Otolaryngologists and advance the field in the state. He also proudly served as president of the GSO in 2000.

***[Click here to email us with your nomination for the next member spotlight!](#)***



## GSO/HNS Members

If you have not done so yet, be sure to  
 renew your dues! 

Please spread the word, and send this  
link for new members to join:

<https://gsohns.wildapricot.org/Join-Us>

 **FOLLOW US ON  
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