

President's Message



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I want to begin by saying what a privilege it has been to serve as President of the Georgia Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery this past year. This community has always meant a great deal to me since my first meeting as a resident at MCG, and I am incredibly proud of what we as a society continue to accomplish together.

Our recent meeting at The Cloister in Sea Island, Georgia was truly special. The setting was beautiful, and the amenities were world-class, but what stood out most was the camaraderie, engaging discussions, and the shared energy around learning and reconnecting. I'm deeply grateful to the speakers, attendees, sponsors, families and everyone else who helped make the weekend so meaningful and fun! We were fortunate to welcome two outstanding keynote speakers this year —Dr. Boyd Gillespie, who

brought practical insights on treating sleep apnea and salivary gland disorders, and Dr. Dennis Kraus, who offered his expertise on the management of melanoma in the head and neck and generated lots of audience engagement with his talk on managing our emotions when dealing with complications. Their presence, along with the phenomenal slate of speakers from the Emory and the Medical College of Georgia/Augusta University programs, elevated our meeting and reminded us just how important it is to continue learning from each other and from leaders across the country.

As I reflect on the meeting in Sea Island, I'm reminded why this society is so important. Beyond the clinical content, it's about the relationships we build, the ideas we share, and the support we offer one another. These connections strengthen not just our own practices, but the future of otolaryngology across Georgia, so thank you all for what you do.

I'd also like to express my sincere thanks to Tara Morrison, Karrie Kirwan and their entire team. Their behind-the-scenes work was instrumental in making the meeting such a success—and in keeping our society running smoothly throughout the year. As I now pass the torch, I'm thrilled to welcome Dr. Cameron Hewitt as the new President of our society. Cameron brings a tremendous amount of knowledge, experience and commitment to advancing our specialty and society here in Georgia. I have no doubt that we are in excellent hands, and I look forward to supporting him and the board in the year ahead.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve, and for all the ways you contribute to this incredible community. Here's to continued growth, connection, and excellence in patient care.

Sincerely,

J. Drew Prosser, MD

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Summer ENTertainer - Board of Governors Report



We had a strong GSO member attendance at our spectacular Summer meeting at Sea Island! We really do have a special state society here in Georgia. Spending time with other colleagues from Georgia to connect on matters both business and family is always a great benefit of membership.

Please attend the Academy of Otolaryngology -HNS Annual meeting this fall and get involved. Our national legislative efforts require input from all members. The meeting dates are October 11-15, 2025 in Indianapolis. We need individuals to speak up and get involved to preserve our specialty into the future. If you don't like the way part of your practice is going, get involved and be part of the solution. All Academy members are invited to attend the Board of Governors meeting at the beginning of the convention.

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).

Now is the time to join Project 535. You can sign up to meet your local congressional representative in August during the congressional recess. Reach out to Brad Gruen at bgruen@entnet.org or cell phone (202)262-2090 and our Academy will help arrange a personal meeting with your local representative at your office or over coffee, etc. to share your real-world, day to day concerns facing your otolaryngology practice. You can also sign up as a state tracker to join monthly discussions of events happening across our otolaryngology community.

One example of the GSO legislative efforts occurred on May 5th when the Academy outreach member, Harry DeCabo, reached out the GSO Board to ask for support in opposing H.R. 2757 that involves greater and inappropriate Audiology scope of practice. Legislation ([H.R. 2757](#)) which would inappropriately expand the scope of practice of audiologists and put patients at risk has once again been introduced in the 119th Congress. [Representatives Gus Bilirakis \(R-FL\) and Kevin Mullin \(D-CA\)](#) introduced the House version of the bill on April 10. This legislation would provide audiologists with direct access to Medicare patients, would reclassify audiologists as providers under Medicare, and ultimately put patients at risk by undermining physician-led team care. Similar to our efforts in the 118th Congress, a letter signed-on by the GSO, has been sent to Congress opposing this bill. We send a strong message of opposition with this sign-on letter while maintaining the current excellent care relationship amongst our audiology colleagues that truly benefits our patients.

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 or on my cell phone at 404-831-0256. 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 Private Practice Rep: Malaika Witter Hewitt MD

Hope to see you at the BOG open forum in the fall!
Elizabeth "Liz" Shaw, MD



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY
**MEDICAL COLLEGE
 OF GEORGIA**

Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery

Summer 2025



From the Chair

Dear Fellow Georgia

Otolaryngologists,

As we reflect on the first half of 2025, I am proud to share the remarkable progress and achievements within our department. The 23rd Annual Porubsky Symposium and Alumni Event was a tremendous success, bringing together respected leaders in our field and honoring the legacy of academic excellence.

We were honored to welcome Dr. David White, Dr. Martin Citardi, and Dr. Christopher Vickery as distinguished speakers, each offering valuable insights and inspiration. Congratulations to Dr. Heather Byrd, our Consultant of the Year, for her exceptional collaboration with our pediatric division.

We celebrated the graduation of three outstanding residents and three

fellows, all moving on to impactful careers. We also welcomed new residents, fellows, faculty, and APPs who bring great energy and promise to our team.

Notably, our Otology division continues to grow with expanded cochlear implant access and surgical education, and we remain focused on building excellence across all programs.

Finally, I extend congratulations to Drs. Koehn, Prosser, and Bigler for their promotions and achievements. Thank you all for your continued dedication to our shared mission.

Sincerely,

Stil Kountakis



Stil Kountakis, MD, PhD

Edward S. Porubsky, MD

*Distinguished Chair in
 Otolaryngology*

*Professor and Chair,
 Department of
 Otolaryngology-Head and
 Neck Surgery
 Medical College of Georgia
 Augusta University*

23rd ANNUAL PORUBSKY SYMPOSIUM AND ALUMNI EVENT

June 13-14, 2025

HIGHLIGHTS

The 23rd Annual Porubsky Symposium and Alumni Event was a remarkable celebration of academic excellence, surgical innovation, and professional milestones. We were honored to welcome this year's Guest of Honor, Dr. David R. White, Professor and Director of Pediatric Otolaryngology at the Medical University of South Carolina. A nationally recognized leader in pediatric ENT, Dr. White has authored more than 100 publications and continues to shape the future of our specialty.

We were also joined by Dr. Martin J. Citardi, Chair of Otorhinolaryngology at McGovern Medical School, UT Health Houston. His presentation reflected decades of leadership in academic rhinology and the transformation of Houston's ENT care landscape. Dr. Christopher L. Vickery, our esteemed Residency Alumni Guest, returned to Augusta from his private practice at Augusta-Aiken ENT & Allergy to share insights from over 15 years in community-based otolaryngology.

Heather Byrd, MD, Chief of Pediatric Anesthesia at Wellstar CHOG, was unanimously selected by our faculty members as Consultant of the Year 2025. Her outstanding collaboration, clinical leadership, and steadfast support of Pediatric Otolaryngology have greatly enhanced patient outcomes. Dr. Byrd exemplifies the spirit of multidisciplinary excellence at Augusta University.

This year, we proudly celebrated the graduation of our chief residents—Drs. Nick Drury, George Davies, and Savannah Stockton—who will be practicing across the Southeast. We also recognized our fellows: Drs. Joel Biester, Nizar Tejani, and Diana Bigler, all of whom completed highly specialized training in endocrine, laryngology, and rhinology.

With inspiring talks, shared memories, and future plans exchanged, the Porubsky Symposium continues to honor its namesake through a legacy of education, leadership, and camaraderie.



GUEST OF HONOR

David R. White, MD
 ■ Professor of Otolaryngology –
 Head and Neck Surgery
 ■ Director of Pediatric Otolaryngology, Medical University of South Carolina



DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER

Martin J. Citardi, MD
 ■ Professor & Chair of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology at McGovern Medical School, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston



ALUMNUS SPEAKER

Christopher L. Vickery, MD
 ■ MCG Otolaryngology Alumnus
 ■ Otolaryngologist at Augusta - Aiken ENT & Allergy, Augusta, GA



CONSULTANT OF THE YEAR 2025

Heather Byrd, MD
 ■ Associate Professor - Department of Anesthesiology & Perioperative Medicine, MCG
 ■ Chief, Pediatric Anesthesia, Wellstar CHOG

Mark your calendar for the 24th ANNUAL PORUBSKY SYMPOSIUM AND ALUMNI EVENT **June 12-13, 2026**

NEW RESIDENTS

Each year, we have the honor of interviewing some of the best and brightest students from medical schools across the country. We are proud to announce successfully matching three exceptional candidates for residency training this year starting July 2025. Dr. Jacob Greenway will be joining us from the University of Alabama at Birmingham's Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine, Dr. Abigail Massey will be joining us from the Medical University of South Carolina, and Dr. David Jones will be joining us from the East Tennessee State University James H. Quillen College of Medicine. We look forward to training these outstanding future Otolaryngologists.



Jacob Greenway, MD



Abigail Massey, MD



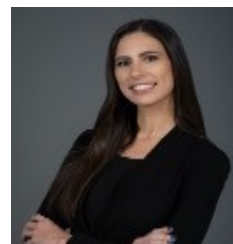
David Jones, MD

NEW FELLOWS

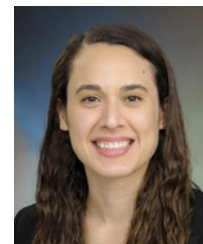
In addition to our new residents, three fellows will begin their fellowship training with us in July 2025. Dr. Ibtisam Mohamed will join us from University of North Carolina-Rhinology Research as the 22nd Rhinology and Skull base fellow. Dr. Isabel Marie Mayorga Perez will join us from University of Puerto Rico-General Surgery Residency as the 18th Endocrine surgery fellow, and Dr. Sophia Quinones will join us from University of Texas Health San Antonio-Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Residency as the 19th Laryngology fellow.



**Ibtisam
Mohammad, MD**
Rhinology

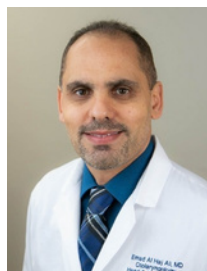


**Isabel Marie
Mayorga Pérez, MD**
Endocrine



Sophia Quinones, MD
Laryngology

NEW FACULTY



Dr. Emad Al Haj Ali has joined the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery as an Assistant Professor

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Emad Al Haj Ali to our faculty as Assistant Professor of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, with a focus on comprehensive ENT care. Originally from Damascus, Syria, Dr. Al Haj Ali received his medical degree from Damascus University and completed his otolaryngology residency at Tishreen Hospital. He brings a broad range of fellowship training, including endocrine surgery under the renowned Dr. David Terris and rhinology under Dr. Peter Catalano, along with additional advanced training at Augusta University and St. Elizabeth's Medical Center/Tufts. Before returning to Augusta, Dr. Al Haj Ali practiced as an attending otolaryngologist at Rivers Health in West Virginia and held consultant roles internationally. His clinical interests include general ENT, endocrine surgery, and sinus and skull base disorders. We are excited to welcome him back and look forward to the many contributions he will make to our clinical, educational, and research missions.



Summer Shropshire,
DNP, FNP-C



Ansley Walter,
DNP

We're excited to welcome new our advanced practice providers to our team. Their expertise enhances patient access, supports our physician faculty, and strengthens our commitment to collaborative, high-quality care.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Heather Koehn, MD**

was promoted to Associate Professor of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery, effective July 1, 2025.

**Dr. Stil Kountakis, MD**

received the 2025 Lester Brown Award—the highest recognition from the Georgia Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. This award is given to an otolaryngologist in Georgia who has made outstanding contributions to our field and has practiced otolaryngology in the State of Georgia for at least 25 years.

**J. Drew Prosser, MD**

was promoted to Full Professor of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery, effective July 1, 2025 and his Triological Society Thesis was accepted.

**Dr. Diana Bigler, MD**

received the MCG Exemplary Teaching Award this year from the Medical College of Georgia College of Medicine and had one poster presentation accepted for NASBS in February 2025. She also will have two poster presentations that will be presented at the COSM meeting in May 2025.

Otologist/Neurotologist

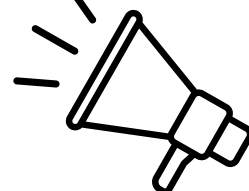
We are seeking an individual at the Assistant or Associate Professor level with fellowship training in Otology/Neurotology. This is a full-time position at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University and Wellstar MCG Health. Excellent resources are available and rank is commensurate with experience.

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.

JOB OPENINGS

To apply and receive additional information, please send a curriculum vitae to
Dr. Stil Kountakis at
skountakis@augusta.edu.



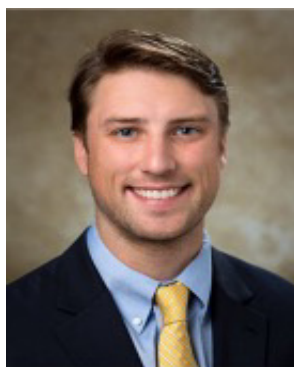
Farewell Graduating Residents & Fellows

CHIEF RESIDENTS

Congratulations to our graduating residents and fellows. Their dedication, professionalism, and hard work during their time at MCG have prepared them well for successful careers in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. We are proud of their accomplishments and confident they will make a meaningful impact on the patients and communities they serve.



Dr. George Davies will be joining Raleigh Capital ENT in Raleigh, NC.



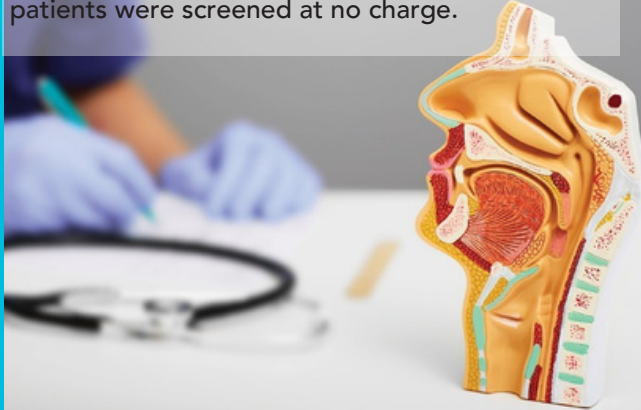
Dr. Nick Drury will be joining Charleston ENT in Beaufort County, South Carolina.



Dr. Savannah Stockton will be joining Brookhaven ENT Allergy and Facial Surgery in Brookhaven, Mississippi.

APRIL - Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month

In honor of Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month in April, we hosted a head and neck cancer screening event on the 25th where 29 patients were screened at no charge.



SOCIAL MEDIA

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.



@mcgotolaryngology



GRADUATING FELLOWS



Diana Bigler, MD will be remaining with us as faculty in Rhinology



Nizar Tejani, MD Laryngology



Joel Biester, MD is returning to his position at Spartanburg Regional Hospital for Endocrine Surgery practice.

CLINICAL SPOTLIGHT: Building Momentum in Otology at MCG

The Otology and Neurotology division at the Medical College of Georgia is experiencing a season of meaningful growth and programmatic renewal — one rooted in patient-centered care, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a renewed emphasis on surgical education.

Cochlear implant volume has doubled since 2023, reflecting both increased regional access to care and rising demand for comprehensive auditory rehabilitation. This is in large part to utilization of the Center of Excellence Grant which has funded both retrospective and prospective studies investigating our cochlear implant pathway to implement a more streamlined process. Faculty and trainees continue to represent the institution across local, regional, and national stages, contributing to academic conversations in implantable hearing technologies, chronic ear disease, and lateral skull base pathology.

Recent educational expansions include the establishment of an audiology externship, providing robust training in a collaborative environment and further integrating audiologic care within the academic mission. Meanwhile, hands-on surgical education continues to evolve: the department is preparing for the dedication of its newly named temporal bone laboratory, and has committed to doubling the frequency of its resident temporal bone course — now offered twice annually to ensure early and sustained exposure to temporal bone anatomy and otologic technique.

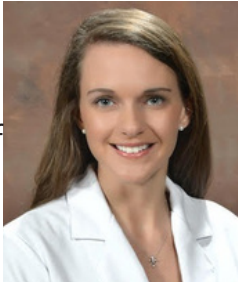
These initiatives underscore MCG’s ongoing investment in a high-functioning, academically engaged otology program — one that supports clinical excellence, scholarly productivity, and resident and fellow education. For those in the community or in academic practice with an interest in collaboration, teaching, or future growth, the environment continues to expand with purpose and promise.



Jason, May, MD



Sarah Hodge, MD



**Sarah King, AuD, CCC-A, FAAA
Director of Audiology**



**Lauren Bush, AUD, CCC-A, FAAA
Audiologist**



**Alex Dawson, AUD, CCC-A, FAAAA
Audiologist**



**Audie C. Gilchrist, AuD, CCC-A
Audiologist**



**Kristie Wilson, AUD, CCC-A
Audiologist**

Massive Retropharyngeal Plexiform Neurofibroma

Daniel Sharbel, MD; Brittany Beisel, MD; Drew Prosser, MD

Medical College of Georgia Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery

An 11 year-old male with past medical history of seizures, autism, developmental delay, obstructive sleep apnea, and neurofibromatosis type 1 presented to an outside hospital due to seizures, and he was intubated at that time. Contrasted MRI neck was obtained, which showed a large, plexiform neurofibroma involving the retropharyngeal space (**Figure 1A**) and causing severe airway compromise. There were also noted neurofibromas involving the cervical rootlets that extended to and caused widening of the right neural foramina at C2-3 and C3-4. These caused contouring of the right lateral aspect of the thecal sac, contributing to mild spinal canal stenosis at C3-4. There was also noted encasement of the right parapharyngeal internal carotid artery (**Figure 1B**). He was then transferred to the Children's Hospital of Georgia for further surgical evaluation. After multidisciplinary discussion, concern remained for possible malignant conversion, and 18-FDG PET/CT was obtained. This demonstrated low-level heterogeneous avidity with no concern for malignancy (**Figure 1C**).

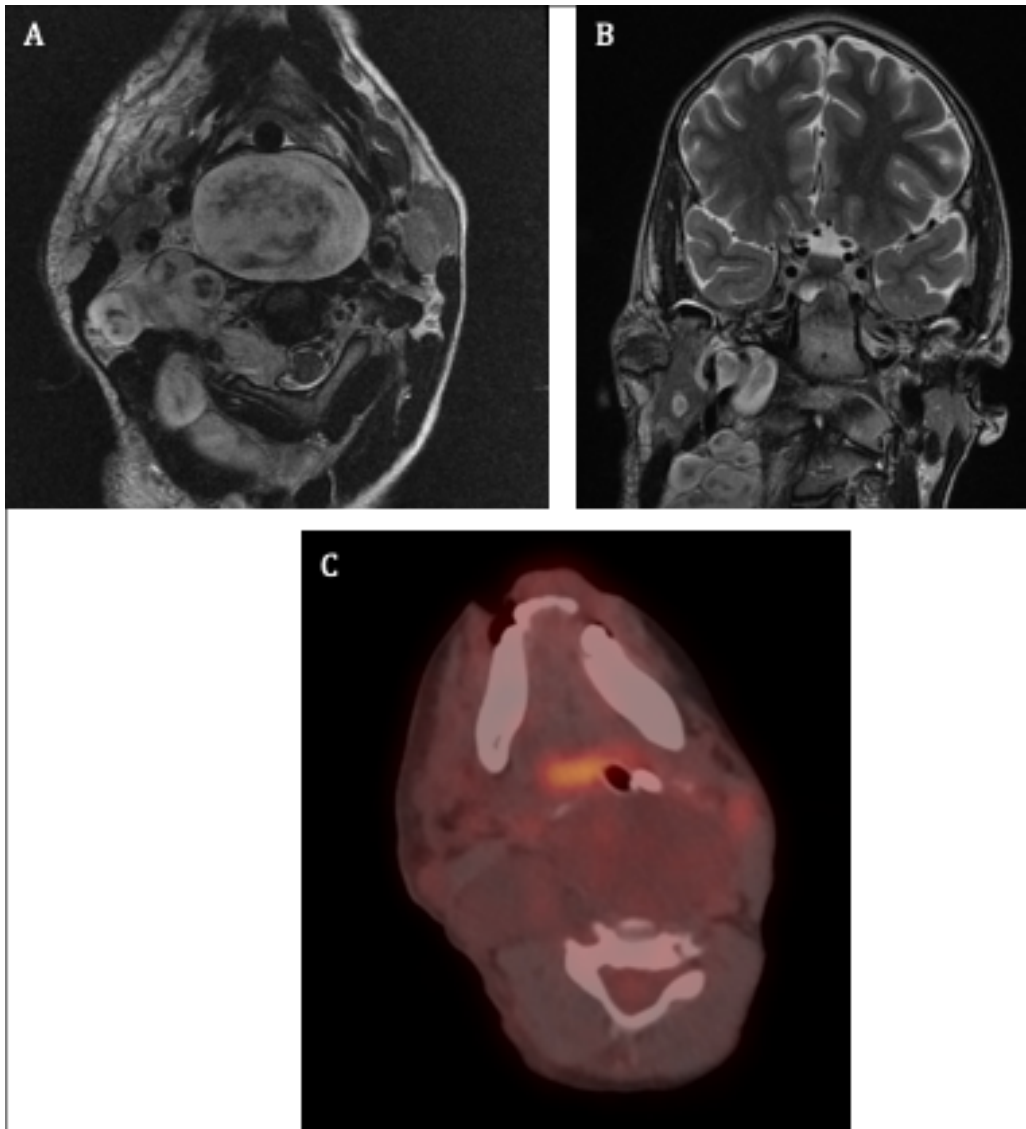


Figure 1A-C. A) Axial T2-weighted MRI C-spine demonstrating large, lobulated plexiform neurofibromas along the right cervical chain with severe compression of the pharyngeal airway and concomitant neurofibromas extending into the C3-4 neural foramen with mild spinal canal stenosis. B) Coronal T2-weighted MRI brain demonstrates encasement of the right parapharyngeal internal carotid artery by neurofibroma (arrow). C) Axial view of 18 FDG-PET/CT retropharyngeal neurofibroma with low heterogeneous avidity similar.

Recommendation was then made for the patient to undergo tracheostomy and debulking of his massive retropharyngeal neurofibroma. The patient was subsequently taken to the operating room for airway exam and tracheostomy. Direct laryngoscopy demonstrated significant retropharyngeal fullness compressing the posterior pharyngeal wall against the epiglottis and complete obstruction of the glottic airway (**Figure 2A**). Tracheostomy was performed uneventfully. The patient then returned to the operating room for staged transcervical excision of his retropharyngeal neurofibroma (**Figure 2B**). Using an anterior cervical spine approach technique, the mass was exposed and its extent was noted to span from the thoracic inlet to the skull base. With a combination of blunt dissection and electrocautery, this mass was carefully excised, taking care to protect the carotid artery and the vagus, recurrent laryngeal, superior laryngeal, and hypoglossal nerves. Post-operatively, the patient progressed well with subsequent resolution of his pharyngeal airway obstruction by post-operative day 6. He was ultimately able to be decannulated while inpatient on post-operative day 8. He continued to demonstrate aspiration across all consistencies post-operatively and was ultimately discharged home with nasogastric tube and plan for aggressive outpatient swallow rehabilitation.

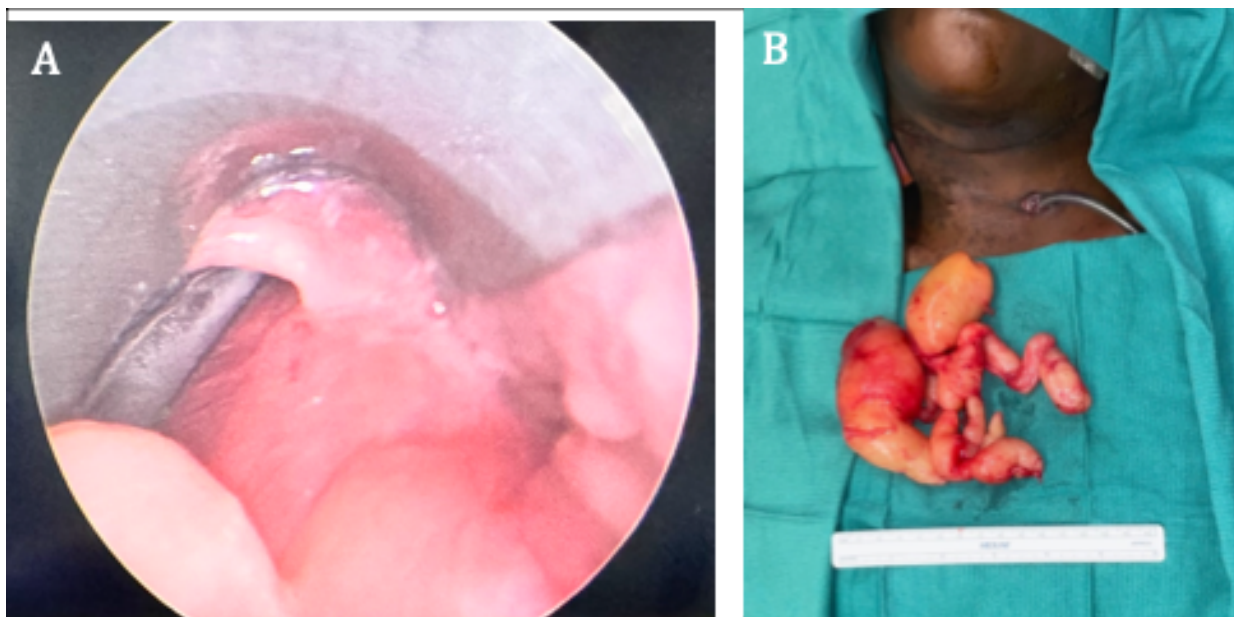


Figure 2A-B. A) Pre-excision direct laryngoscopy demonstrating severely obstructed supraglottic airway due to mass effect. B) Large retropharyngeal neurofibroma, excised via right transcervical approach.



Metro Atlanta Educational Society
for Otolaryngology-Head and
Neck Surgery

***Save The
Date!***





GSO/HNS & MAESO SCIENTIFIC ASSEMBLY

DECEMBER 6 - 7, 2025

THE RITZ-CARLTON REYNOLDS, LAKE OCONEE

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>

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