EMORY

The Scope

A Newsletter by Emory Department of Otolaryngology & Head and Neck Surgery

EMORY | The Scope

From the Chair: Global Outreach Through Partnership, Purpose, and Shared Knowledge

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

As we share updates from the Department of Otolaryngology, I want to begin by highlighting one of the most meaningful aspects of our work: our commitment to global health. Otolaryngology is, at its core, a surgical specialty rooted in restoration—of hearing, breathing, speaking, and quality of life. That same spirit drives our international outreach. But our goal is not just to provide care—it is to partner with colleagues in under-resourced regions and help them build sustainable systems, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and infrastructure to continue care long after we've returned home.

Global health work has traditionally focused on short-term service trips: teams fly in, perform surgeries, and leave. These efforts are often lifesaving and important. But if our impact ends when we leave, we've missed a deeper opportunity. The real value lies in what comes next—building capacity, training surgeons, and supporting long-term local growth. That is the work our department is committed to.

This year, our teams have traveled to several countries to support care and education. In Guatemala, we worked alongside ENT residents and faculty at Roosevelt Hospital in Guatemala City to provide skull base surgery. In the Philippines, we partnered with local physicians to deliver both surgical care and education. In South Africa, our faculty provided ultrasound training to physicians expanding their diagnostic skill set. Across each location, our approach remains the same: work with, not for; teach, not just treat; partner, not direct.

We focus on education and self-sufficiency because we've seen the long-term impact it can have. A single surgery may change one life, but a trained surgeon can go on to change thousands. A portable ultrasound may allow a week of diagnostics; a locally run clinic can deliver a generation of care. Our philosophy is based on that multiplier effect. Our goal is not only to treat—but to help build systems that allow treatment to continue.

In many settings, local providers face constraints we may never encounter—resource scarcity, political barriers, or workforce shortages. Yet these same colleagues often demonstrate remarkable resilience and innovation. Our role is not to solve their problems for them, but to walk beside them, share knowledge, and support their solutions. That's how we foster self-reliance, not dependency.
Our outreach extends beyond in-person work. Increasingly, we are engaged in digital education, mentoring, and curriculum development. Virtual lectures, asynchronous surgical education platforms, and case consultations allow us to support international partners even when travel isn't feasible. These collaborations reflect a more sustainable model—built on access, consistency, and mutual respect.

Just as we teach, we learn. Exposure to different clinical environments and approaches sharpens our own practice. Surgical techniques adapted for limited-resource settings, local approaches to care, and cultural differences in patient communication all inform and enrich what we do at home. Global health is not just service—it's scholarship, innovation, and perspective.

We also recognize the value of global experiences in training future leaders. Several of our residents and fellows have participated in international trips, and we are working to formalize and expand these opportunities. Operating in new settings, teaching across languages, and adapting to unfamiliar environments builds both clinical skill and professional maturity. In today's interconnected world, this perspective isn't optional—it's essential.

This work doesn't happen alone. I'm grateful to the faculty who dedicate time, energy, and expertise to these efforts—often at significant personal cost. I'm also thankful for the donors and institutional leaders who recognize the long-term value of global health and support it. And above all, we are privileged to work alongside international colleagues—skilled, committed, and visionary partners who make this work both possible and impactful.

Looking ahead, we aim to deepen our collaborations, expand our educational reach, and build frameworks that endure. The future of global health will not be shaped by parachuted interventions or short-term fixes, but by local empowerment, shared expertise, and trusted partnerships. The best way to help any nation meet its healthcare needs is not to replicate our system, but to support theirs—to share what we know, back what they build, and celebrate their success.

Let's continue to lead not only with surgical skill, but with clarity of purpose and commitment to partnership. The world doesn't need heroes—it needs colleagues. And in the quiet, steady work of teaching and collaboration, we find the most lasting form of impact.

Warm regards,

Arturo Solares, MD
Professor of Otolaryngology and Neurosurgery
Chair, Department of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery

C. Arturo Solares, MD, FACS

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Otolaryngology at Atlanta VA Medical Center

Otolaryngology and Multidisciplinary Collaboration at the Atlanta VA

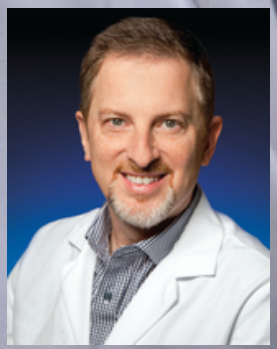
The Atlanta VA Otolaryngology team currently serves almost 150,000 Veterans. The team continues to offer state-of-the-art care for a diverse array of otolaryngologic diseases. The service is continuing to increase its volume of in-clinic procedures to optimize operating room time and to avoid the unnecessary risk of general anesthesia for many Veterans. Inferior turbinate reduction, vocal cord injections, and thyroid nodule radiofrequency ablation are just a few of the procedures that are offered. This has been beneficial for both patients and resident education.

Multidisciplinary care is a strength at the Atlanta VA. There are currently a myriad of multidisciplinary conferences that meet regularly to discuss patients with challenging otolaryngologic pathology. Some of these include Endocrinology conference, Vestibular case conference, Long COVID Board, Head and Neck cancer board, and Swallowing/dysphagia conference. Ms. Donna Crawford, PA, also has recently created a head and neck cancer survivorship clinic that reaches out to patients with a history of head and neck cancer that are more than 5 years after completion of treatment.

Carrie E. Flanagan, MD

Merry E. Sebelik, MD

Candace Hobson, MD



Norman Lester, MD

Alfreda King, RN

Donna Crawford, PA

James Conley, PA

The VA otolaryngology team is made of both generalists and specialists. Dr. Candace Hobson has increased her presence at the VA which will provide much needed otology knowledge and expertise. Dr. Sebelik and Dr. Kligerman offer tertiary level endocrine surgery and head and neck cancer management. Dr. Flanagan provides tertiary level rhinology care. There is also a facial plastic surgeon that assists the team. Dr. Lester serves as the general otolaryngologist for the VA ENT service. He is a wealth of knowledge for the residents given his background in both private practice, military medicine, and prior VA assignments. He is assisted by Mr. James Conley and Ms. Donna Crawford, the VA's otolaryngology physician assistants.

Promoting Research and Surgical Quality at the Atlanta VA

The team is looking forward to presentation of their clinical research at national meetings in 2025, including the American Head & Neck Society and Association of VA Speech-Language Pathologists. Dr. Kligerman has established a surgical quality initiative program along with a former VA Quality Scholar, Dr. Luke Galloway. Dr. Kligerman has also taken the role of otolaryngology resident research coordinator at the VA.

Luke Galloway, MD

Maxwell Kligerman, MD

Rhinology and Skull Base Surgery

Rhinology Clinical Trials

We are currently serving as a site for two industry sponsored clinical trials of potential new treatments for CRSwNP. DUET (ACT18207) is a phase 2 trial of lunsekimig, a TSLP/IL-13 inhibitor, that will be enrolling through the summer of 2025. For additional information, see below. In the near future, we will start recruiting for CEREN1 (EFC18418), a phase 3 study of itepekimab, an IL-33 inhibitor.

Clinical trials can be a good option for patients with significant polyp recurrence who are not interested in additional surgery or who have struggled to access other biologics. If you have any patients that may be interested, please email Dr. Thomas Edwards at thomas.edwards@emory.edu with the patient's contact information, and we will schedule a visit to discuss study details with the patient.

DUET (ACT18207)

Key Inclusion

- Aged 18 through 70 years
- Bilateral nasal polyps (NPS of at least 5 out of a maximum of 8, with a score of at least 2 for each nostril)
- Symptoms of CRS despite intranasal corticosteroid treatment for at least 2 months prior to screening period.
  - Moderate or severe nasal obstruction AND at least 1 out of the following 2 symptoms at screening: (1) reduction or lost sense of smell; (2) anterior and/or posterior rhinorrhea.
- Agree to effective contraception use (both male and female participants)

Key Exclusion

- Have undergone any nasal/sinus surgery within 6 months before screening
- Allergic fungal sinusitis
- Have smoked (including tobacco or marijuana) or vaped within 6 months of screening visit, or plan to do so at any point during the study.
- Systemic steroids within 1 month of screening visit.

Contact Information
Dr. Thomas Edwards
thomas.edwards@emory.edu

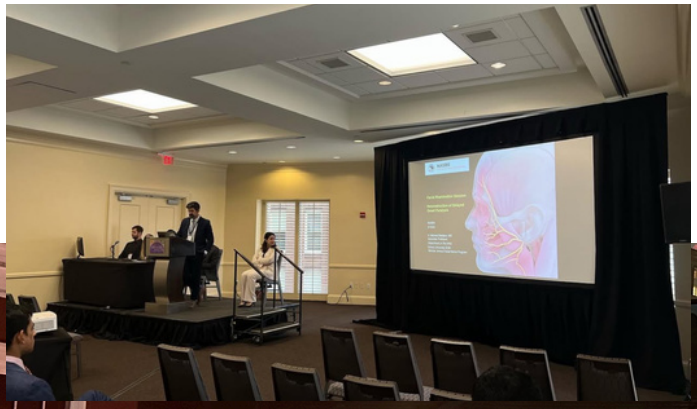
Cranial Base Surgery Course 2025

The Emory University Department of Neurosurgery is pleased to host the upcoming Cranial Base Surgery Course, scheduled for September 11–13, 2025. This comprehensive three-day workshop, led by skull base ENT and neurosurgical experts, will cover fundamental concepts in traditional skull base microsurgical approaches, advanced expanded endoscopic techniques, robotic-assisted exoscopic visualization, and state-of-the-art neuro-imaging for planning and navigation. Participants will also engage in discussions about case selection, technical decision-making, complications, and management strategies. Hands-on sessions will provide participants the opportunity to practice simulated surgical procedures using preserved cadaveric specimens. The workshop is specifically designed for neurosurgery and otolaryngology professionals across all career levels, including residents, fellows, attending physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and others.

Registration is now open!

The Emory Skull Base Team at NASBS 2025

The Emory Skull Base Team delivered an outstanding performance at the recent North American Skull Base Society (NASBS) Annual Meeting held this past February in New Orleans. Faculty, research fellows, and residents from Neurosurgery and Otolaryngology delivered an impressive array of presentations. Among the highlights were exceptional lectures by Dr. Baddour, Dr. Vivas, Dr. Barrow, and Dr. Garzon. Additionally, the Emory Skull Base Team was honored with a research grant recognizing the team's dedication and innovative research.



Robotic Cochlear Implant Surgery

We are proud to be the only program in Georgia offering robotic cochlear implant surgery using the advanced Iota Motion Robot. Cochlear implantation requires precise, gentle handling due to the cochlea's delicate structure, and robotic assistance significantly reduces trauma by allowing a slow, controlled, and consistent electrode array insertion. Compared to manual insertion methods, robotic insertion substantially decreases both maximum insertion force and force variability, leading to better preservation of cochlear integrity.

Dr. Vivas is the Program Co-Chair for CI2025

We are excited to share Dr. Vivas is the Program Co-Chair for CI2025, the premier Cochlear Implant Meeting taking place in Boston. This influential conference will explore critical topics, including candidacy and outcomes in asymmetric hearing loss, strategies for improving cochlear implant access among underserved pediatric and adult populations, and methods to maximize outcomes across all ages. Among other topics, the program will also emphasize enhancing accessibility for cochlear implant, reflecting our commitment to comprehensive hearing care.

Esther Vivas,MD

Temporal Bone Course 2025

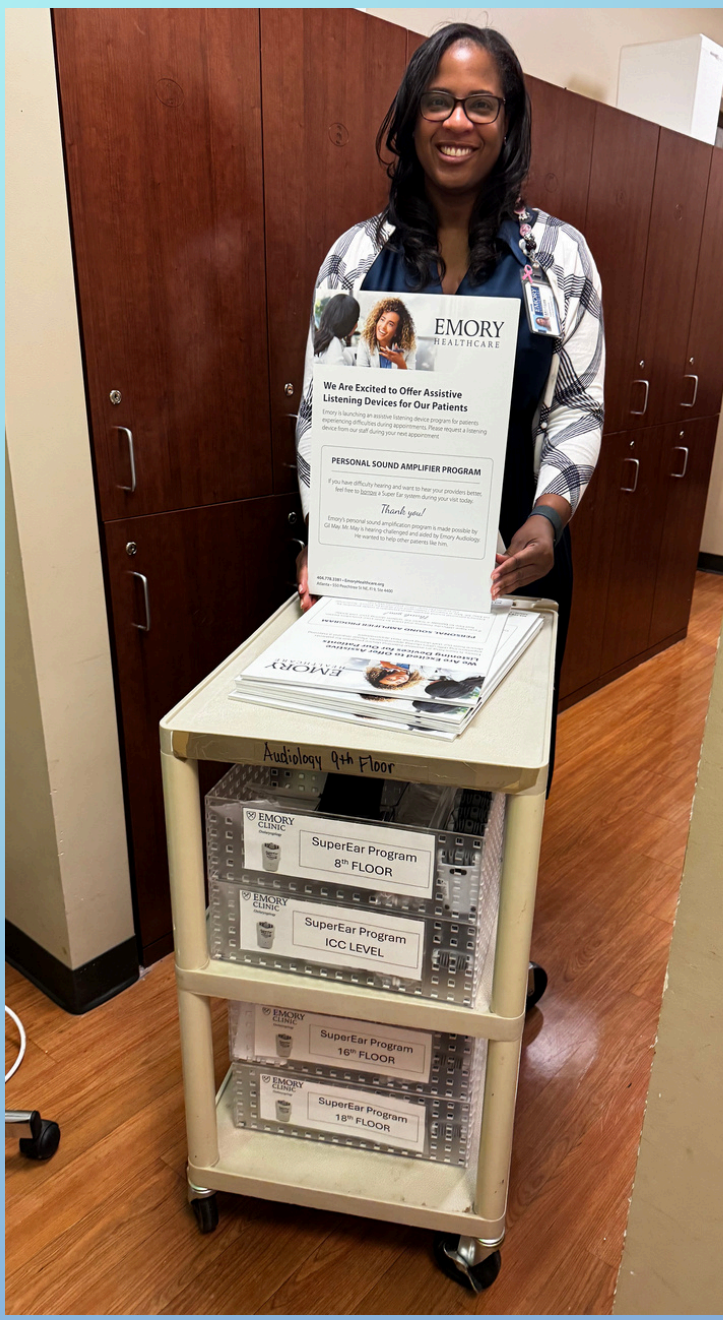
The Department of Otolaryngology at Emory University School of Medicine is holding the Annual Temporal Bone Surgical Dissection Course from October 27 - 31, 2025. This course is an intensive five-day hands-on experience designed specifically for otologic surgeons and residents, focusing on surgical anatomy and refining techniques critical for treatment of complex ear diseases. Participants will engage in detailed temporal bone drilling sessions covering chronic ear disease management, stapedectomy, ossicular reconstruction, facial nerve exposure, vestibular surgery, transmastoid labyrinthectomy, internal auditory canal dissection, and cochlear and bone-anchored implant surgery, alongside both intact canal wall and canal wall down mastoidectomy. Additionally, radiological and histological aspects of the temporal bone will be explored, providing attendees with a well-rounded educational experience.

Scan for more information

Audiology

Otology and Audiology Patient Gives Gift of Hearing!

A SuperEar program was launched at Winship in March 2025 for patients with difficulty hearing, in an effort to ensure they can actively participate in their healthcare. Seven floors, including lobby level, at WEM were equipped with a compact kit of SuperEar personal amplifiers and disposable headphones, which can be worn by a patient and will amplify voices of others. Miriam Featherstone, AuD and Kelley Dwyer, AuD were instrumental in the conception and logistics of this program, funded by a grateful Emory Otology/Audiology patient.



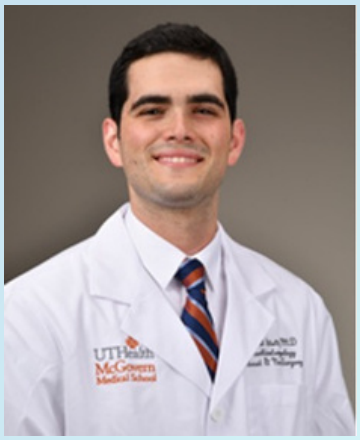
Endocrine Head & Neck

Endocrine Head & Neck Surgery Fellowship

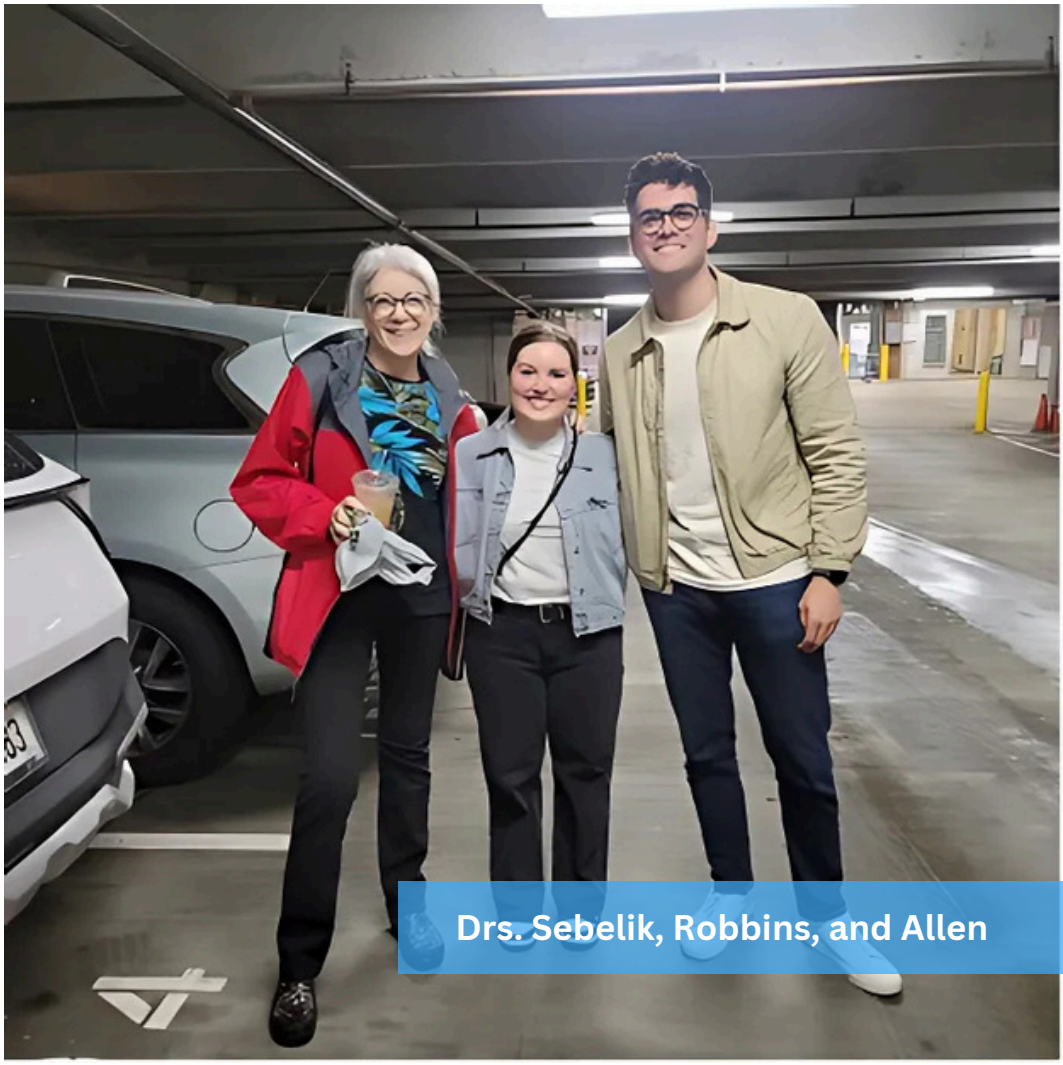
Congratulations to our 2024-2025 Endocrine Head & Neck Surgery Fellow, Dr. Alexa Robbins. Dr. Robbins has accepted a position with UAMS-Baptist Hospital in Little Rock, AR, where she can embark on her Endocrine HNS academic career in her home town. She received her MD from UAMS and completed Otolaryngology, Head & Neck Residency training at Emory in 2024. We will miss her brilliant clinical and teaching skills, but know that UAMS is gaining a rising star in Endocrine Head & Neck Surgery.

In July 2025, we welcome Dr. David Allen, our next Endocrine HNS fellow. Dr. Allen received his MD from The Ohio State University in 2020, and is completing Otolaryngology, HNS residency at UTHSC in Houston, TX. We cannot wait for him to join us in Atlanta.

Alexa Robbins, MD



David Allen, MD



Drs. Sebelik, Robbins, and Allen

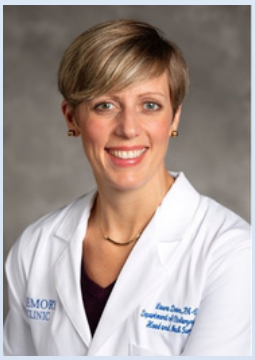
Endocrine Division Growth

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Meredith Lilly back to the Endocrine Head & Neck Surgery Division in 2025. Dr. Lilly completed OTO-HNS residency training and Endocrine HNS training at Emory University. She brings her dedication, work ethic, and excellence to our division, further augmenting our high standards in patient care, education and clinical expansion. Her practice at Winship Emory Midtown begins April 1, 2025.

Meredith Lilly, MD

Kendra Farrand, PA

We're also excited to welcome Kendra Farrand, PA, our new APP in Endocrine Head and Neck, who joined the team last month! Her presence has already brought great energy, and we're thrilled to have her on board.



Laura Dean PA-C

Merry E. Sebelik, MD

Maxwell Kligerman, MD

State-of-the-Art Clinic Based Thyroid Interventions

Laura Dean, PA-C, Endocrine APP, has continued to expand her ultrasound-guided biopsy clinic at Winship Emory Midtown. Since its introduction in 2019, this clinic has grown to include biopsy services for all indicated head & neck sites, not just the thyroid. The clinic has become an integral part of multidisciplinary thyroid and head and neck care provided by the Head & Neck team.

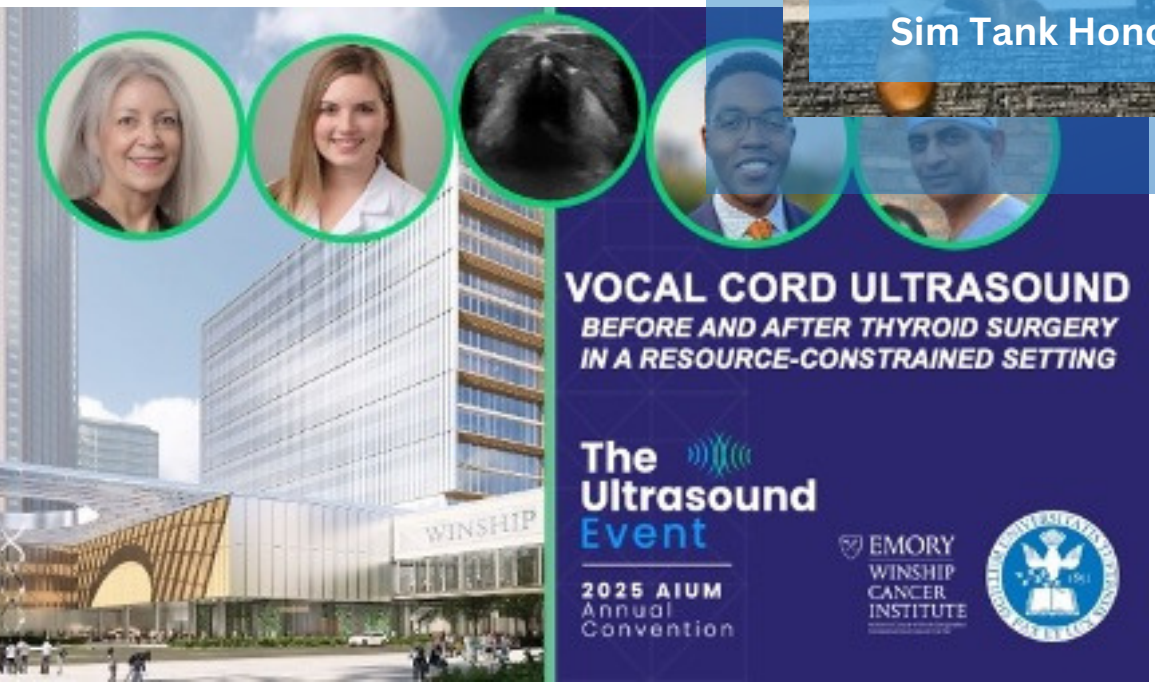
Radiofrequency ablation (RFA) for thyroid pathology is now available at Winship Emory Midtown. Dr. Sebelik introduced Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA) services to patients at the Atlanta VAMC in 2022, offering an exciting and thyroid-preserving alternative to patients with symptomatic benign thyroid nodules. Dr. Maxwell Kligerman has completed training in Brazil and will be ready to offer patients this important alternative. Grady Head & Neck Surgeons, Drs. Hamilton and Tyler are developing their RFA program as well. As this important non-surgical treatment becomes better integrated into healthcare financing models in 2025, each of the Emory affiliate sites staffed by our Endocrine-focused head and neck surgeons will be able to offer RFA.

Endocrine Team at National Meetings

Project developers William Sebelik, Dr. Ben Wibonele, PGYV, and Dr. Merry Sebelik received 2nd place in the 2024 American Academy of OTO-HNS Annual Sim Tank competition. They showcased their novel ultrasound FNA trainer, an ultrasound phantom designed to encourage accuracy and timeliness in novices learning ultrasound guided needle placement.

Dr. Sebelik, along with Drs. Alexa Robbins, Endocrine fellow, Hope Iyiewuare, PGYIV and Jagdish Dhingra, Tufts University, presented their work on Vocal Cord Ultrasound in Low Resource Settings at the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine.

Sim Tank Honors at AAO-HNS 2024



International Educational Outreach

Endocrine Head & Neck Surgery faculty members, Drs. Merry Sebelik and Maxwell Kligerman conducted a comprehensive point-of-care Head and Neck Ultrasound skills course in Cape Town, South Africa in December 2024. The ultrasound course was part of a 4-day Symposium and Head & Neck Skills Course sponsored by the University of Cape Town and the International Federation of Otolaryngology Societies. The course included learning and practicing ultrasound-guided needle placement on phantoms, in preparation for interventions such as biopsy, alcohol ablation, medication injection and thermal ablation.

Drs. Sebelik and Kligerman

Cape Town Ultrasound Skills Course

In February 2025, Dr. Sebelik was invited to conduct an ultrasound workshop at Asian Medical Center in Manila, Philippines. She was joined by Dr. Hope Iyiewuare, Emory PGYIV who participated with otolaryngology residents from 3 different training programs in Manila.

Global Health and Education, with an Endocrine Head & Neck Focus

In February 2025 Dr. Hope Iyiewuare, Emory PGYIV joined surgery faculty from Philippine General Hospital, the University of Tennessee, and Dr. Sebelik along with members of the NGO, Memphis Mission of Mercy to provide thyroid, head & neck, cleft lip & palate, and general surgery teaching and procedures.

Dr. Iyiewuare operating with Dr. Michael Bautista, general surgery resident from Manila

Drs. Iyiewuare and Sebelik in the OR

To showcase the Memphis Mission of Mercy and others, Dr. Sebelik published a retrospective of her long-time experience collaborating with colleagues in the Philippines in the November 2024 issue of the AAO-HNS Bulletin:

https://bulletin.entnet.org/aaohns-programs/article/22925832/stories-from-the-road-23-years-of-service-education-and-friendship-in-the-philippines

Facial Plastics

New Facial Plastic Surgery Fellowship at Emory

We are excited to welcome our inaugural Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery fellow, Dr. Alex Kim, who will be joining us in 2025. Dr. Kim will be the first fellow in this subspecialty at Emory, marking an important milestone in the growth of our division. Interviews for our 2026 fellowship position are now underway, and we look forward to meeting the talented candidates who will continue to build on this exciting new chapter.

Alexandrea Kim, MD

Resident Training Sessions

We recently hosted successful lab dissection courses led by Drs. Baddour, Sethna, and Chou, providing our residents with hands-on experience in advanced surgical techniques. These sessions focused specifically on nerve microsurgery and local flaps for head and neck reconstruction.

Dr. Sethna at our resident course

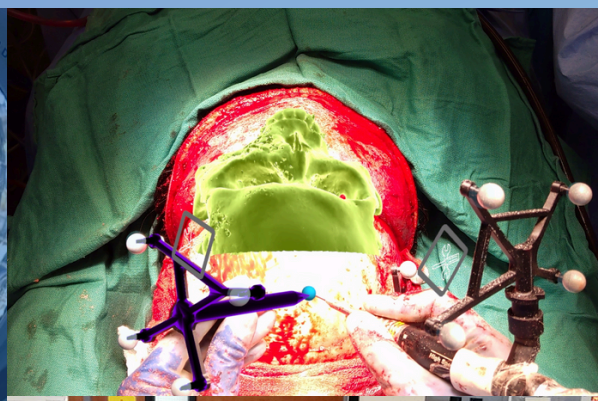
Broadening Facial Plastic Surgery Practice

Our department has established and continues to grow a dedicated affirming facial surgery practice. Our board-certified surgeons specialize in advanced procedures that align facial features with each patient's goals. We provide personalized care with treatment plans tailored to each individual's aspirations.

Augmented Reality in the Operating Room

We are proud to have performed Emory's first HoloLens augmented-reality (AR) assisted surgeries, successfully treating craniofacial fibrous dysplasia and performing facial reconstructive procedures. The precision and stability provided by fixed bony landmarks make craniomaxillofacial (CMF) surgery particularly well-suited for incorporating AR navigation. By implementing this advanced technology, our surgeons can visualize anatomical structures in real-time, enhance surgical accuracy, and improve patient outcomes.

Dr. Chou and Dr. Wibonele (PGY5)

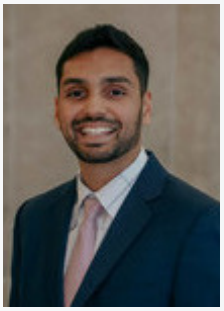


Resident News

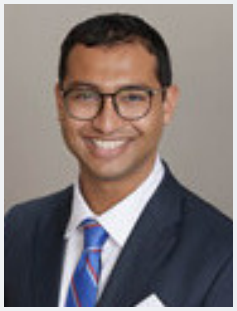
Welcome to the Emory ENT Family!

Incoming Interns


Alejandra Rodas, MD


Swapnil Shah, MD


Sneha Chauhan, MD


Jay Shah, MD


Daniel Eyassu, MD