The Otolaryngologist as Educator: Guiding Principles

Marvin P. Fried, MD¹, and Sonya Malekzadeh, MD²

No sponsorships or competing interests have been disclosed for this article.

Keywords
education, specialty society

Received August 27, 2014; accepted September 5, 2014.

Our specialty is small and rendered even smaller by the disproportionately large share of subspecialties, each represented by a distinct society. In the quest for coherence and unity between the disciplines of otolaryngology, the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery (AAO-HNS), in collaboration with specialty societies, formed the Subspecialty Society Advisory Council (SSAC). The SSAC, an advisory body to the AAO-HNS, “functions as a conduit for improved communication and identification of shared opportunities.”

Despite the external forces that have driven us to ever more narrow specialization, we remain united by our commitments to the profession. As otolaryngologists, whether a generalist or specialist, we serve the dual roles of healer and educator. While we may care for patients with various disorders of the head and neck, education is a unifying force across our specialty. We all teach; we teach patients, health care professionals, and colleagues—be they residents, medical students, or junior associates.

Written to foster consensus and support for combined educational efforts across the specialties, the guiding strategy requires broad involvement and participation by all otolaryngologists. The following document has been endorsed by the SSAC and approved by AAO-HNS.

I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow.

—Modern version of the Hippocratic Oath

As members of the healing profession, it is our duty to act as educators. Sharing knowledge with our colleagues or passing it on to tomorrow’s doctors is one of the few ways in which we can positively impact patient and public health care. The ancient Hippocratic Oath recognizes our educational mission “to be without fee and covenant.”

This document sets out principles to guide education and training among otolaryngologists. Deliberately ambitious, but also achievable, we should aim to follow these principles in full:

- As physicians, we must be committed to lifelong learning in order to maintain the medical knowledge and clinical skills necessary for the provision of quality care.
- The specialty must strive to ensure that all of its members are expert and that appropriate mechanisms are available for physicians to accomplish this goal.
- All physicians have the professional and moral obligation to contribute to the education and training of other doctors, medical students, and allied health care professionals. Just as those who taught us out of their own sense of medical heritage, so should we continue in that noble tradition.
- External forces (political, legal, and financial) should not influence and distract us from the commitment to help train other health professionals or those aspiring to the medical profession.
- By promising to uphold the Hippocratic Oath, we accept these responsibilities, without stipulation or proviso.
- Above all, we are otolaryngologists. Irrespective of subspecialty, we must foster an environment of mutual respect among ourselves, our colleagues, and our learners. We share the challenge of learning and teaching not only the medical and surgical aspects of the specialty but also the behaviors and values that characterize an otolaryngologist.
- These guiding principles serve both as a pledge and a reminder to otolaryngologists that the shared

¹Montefiore Medical Center, The University Hospital of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, New York, USA
²MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, Washington, District of Columbia, USA

Corresponding Author:
Marvin P. Fried, MD, Montefiore Medical Center, The University Hospital of Albert Einstein College of Medicine, 3400 Bainbridge Avenue, Bronx, NY 10467-2404, USA
Email: mfried@montefiore.org
commitments of educator and healer are the foundation on which the profession built its ethical values.

Acknowledgments
Reviewed, approved, and input provided by the following SSAC members: Richard Rosenfeld, MD, MPH (American Society of Pediatric Otolaryngology), Kathleen Yaremchuk, MD, MSA (Triologic Society), Albert L. Merati, MD (American Broncho-Esophagological Association), Milan R. Amin, MD (American Broncho-Esophagological Association), Brian B. Burkey, MD (American Head and Neck Society), Roberto A. Cueva, MD (American Otological Society), Edward H. Farrior, MD (American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery), Gady Har-El, MD (American Laryngological Association), Michael J. McKenna, MD (American Neurotology Society), J. David Osguthorpe, MD (American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy), James N. Palmer, MD (American Rhinologic Society), and Richard W. Waguespack, MD (American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery)

Author Contributions
Marvin P. Fried, coauthor; Sonya Malekzadeh, coauthor.

Disclosures
Competing interests: None.
Sponsorships: None.
Funding source: None.