



## Pete S. Batra, MD, FACS

The Stanton A. Friedberg, MD, Endowed Chair of Otolaryngology and Bronchoesophagology

### Advancement of Medicine

Our department continues to thrive across the clinical, educational, research and service missions. Rush

Otorhinolaryngology remains a market leader in adult inpatient and outpatient surgery in the greater Chicago area. Our team —

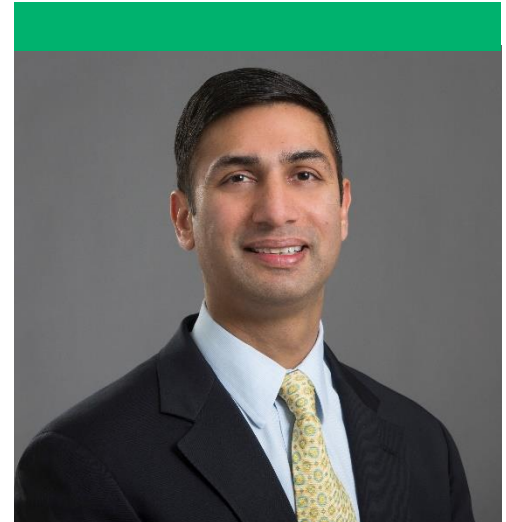
22 surgeons, nine audiologists, eight advanced practice providers, and two speech-language pathologists — delivers high-quality, comprehensive care through 16 clinical programs at eight locations across the Chicago area and Northwest Indiana.

We were pleased to welcome several new faculty members this year. **Steven Sims, MD**, joined the department as professor, section chief of laryngology, and director of the Voice and Airway Program after a distinguished 20-year career at the University of Illinois Chicago. **Ryan Nesemeier, MD**, joined the Section of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery as director of facial gender affirmation surgery following more than four years on faculty at The Ohio State University. **Kristal Brown, MD**, will join the department in January 2026 as a comprehensive otolaryngologist and director of otolaryngology at Rush's Munster, Indiana, location.

U.S. News & World Report has ranked our program No. 19 nationally and No. 1 in Illinois, and our residency program continues to be ranked No. 1 in Illinois by Doximity.

### Research

Our faculty and residents continue to make meaningful contributions to advancing research in our specialty. The department has committed \$500,000 in seed funding over five years to promote discovery and innovation among faculty and trainees. Your generosity through the Friedberg Endowed Chair has been instrumental in supporting this effort.





This past year, the department successfully hosted a Friedberg Research Fellow. Amani Alvi, a student in the combined BA/MD program at Case Western Reserve University, had a highly productive year, working closely with multiple faculty members on impactful projects that resulted in several abstracts and publications. In addition, endowed chair funding supported a portion of the salary for a second full-time clinical research coordinator, Lauren Kret, significantly enhancing our clinical trial infrastructure and throughput.

### Clinical Studies and Trials

Our faculty remain deeply engaged in FDA-sponsored and investigator-initiated clinical trials evaluating novel therapies and surgical technologies across rhinology, head and neck oncology, sleep surgery, and other subspecialties. Collectively, faculty and residents are currently involved in **51 active prospective and retrospective studies** and contributed to **49 peer-reviewed publications** over the past year.

Your continued generosity has directly supported both clinical and basic science research efforts across the department. Major ongoing initiatives include:

ORA# 24081401: A Prospective, Multi-Center, Open-Label Study to Evaluate the Safety and Effectiveness of TurbAlign™ to achieve Middle Turbinate Medialization after Functional Endoscopic Sinus Surgery (FESS) (SpirAir, Inc). PI: P. Filip, MD.

ORA# 24071604: The High AHI/High BMI Post Approval Study (Inspire Sleep, Inc). PI: M. Hutz, MD.

ORA# 24062801: Multicenter Pilot Study of the Cryosa System for the Treatment of Obstructive Sleep Apnea (ARCTIC-3) (Cryosa, Inc). PI: M. Hutz, MD.

ORA# 20070903 NRG-HN006: Randomized Phase II/III Trial of Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy Versus Elective Neck Dissection for Early-Stage Oral Cavity Cancer (NRG). PI: M. Bhayani, MD.

ORA# 23100303: Surgical Drain Fluid for Detection of Molecular Residual Disease (MRD) in Patients With HPV(-) Head and Neck Cancers (Droplet Biosciences). PI: S. Al-Khudari, MD



## Publications, Presentations, and National Leadership (Abbreviated)

- 14 original peer-reviewed publications in 2025
- Served as past president of the American Rhinologic Society, or ARS, and member of its Executive Committee (2024–2025)
- Co-director, Cancun Otolaryngology Colloquium (February 2026), in collaboration with UT Houston
- Guest panelist and moderator at multiple national ARS meetings and symposia
- Guest speaker, RUSH-MD Anderson Cancer Center Multidisciplinary Head and Neck Cancer Symposium (May 2025)
- Moderator, North American Skull Base Society Annual Meeting (February 2025)
- Guest moderator, Triological Society Combined Sections Meeting (January 2025)
- Completed term on the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Annual Meeting Program Committee

## Education

Thanks to your continued generosity, we have made meaningful strides in educating future leaders in otolaryngology. Your support ensures that our residents can fully engage in a rigorous and evolving training environment. In addition to comprehensive clinical and academic instruction, our program offers unique educational tracks leading to a **master's degree in clinical research or health systems management** and a **Global Health Certification**, each shaping long-term career development.

Your philanthropic investment enhances the overall resident experience by funding board preparation resources, annual in-service training exams, travel associated with the global health track, and other valuable career-development tools. The fund also supports participation by medical students, residents and fellows in national conferences to present their research and course attendance for chief residents to prepare them for the next stages of their careers.

This past year, our department hosted several high-impact national educational events, including the *Rush Otolaryngology Global Health Symposium*, *Rush ENT Course for PCPs* and *Rush Update in Otolaryngology 2024*. We were also proud to introduce the *Rush Head and Neck Comprehensive Cancer Symposium* to our educational portfolio this past year.



We are deeply appreciative of your support for our visiting lectureship program, which allows us to bring nationally recognized experts to Rush to share insights during grand rounds and other academic engagements. Recent distinguished visitors included:

**Kofi Boahene, MD**, professor of otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Johns Hopkins Medicine

**Troy Woodard, MD**, professor of otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Cleveland Clinic

**Steven Chang, MD**, professor and chair, Department of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Surgery, Henry Ford Health

In addition, your contributions have directly supported hands-on learning and research in our skull base lab, where residents and fellows benefit from the acquisition of anatomical specimens for advanced surgical training and research. This has enhanced their technical skills and deepened their understanding of complex anatomy in a safe, educational environment.

#### Community Outreach

Service remains a cornerstone of our mission. Under the leadership of **Ashok Jagasia, MD, PhD**, the department continues to expand community and global outreach through the **CURE Initiative**. This includes weekly ENT clinics for individuals accessing Chicago's shelter system, rural outreach in central Illinois and semiannual global health missions to the Dominican Republic. Many patients seen through these initiatives receive follow-up and surgical care at Rush University Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital.

We are also proud to participate in the **Rush REACH** program, providing early exposure to health care careers for underserved high school and college students.

## The Year Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

As I step down as Chair of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery to assume the role of **Dean and Senior Vice President of Rush Medical College**, I am deeply grateful for the privilege of stewarding the Friedberg Endowed Chair for nearly 12 years. **Dr. Kerstin Stenson** is serving as interim chair. In my role as dean, I will work closely with leadership to launch a national search for a permanent chair this spring.

Looking ahead, we remain focused on several strategic priorities, including:



- Organize clinical and academic services under the **Enterprise Department** umbrella across the Rush University System for Health.
- Recruit four more specialists to the department (pediatric otolaryngologist, sleep surgeon, head and neck surgeon, and rhinologist/skull base surgeon).

## With Gratitude

Thank you for your continued support of the Department of Otorhinolaryngology — Head and Neck Surgery. Your generosity has been instrumental in expanding our clinical reach, advancing research, and strengthening education and training. The Friedberg Chair has enabled us to pursue innovative scholarship and deepen our commitment to excellence — advancements that would not be possible without your partnership.

I remain deeply grateful for your support and extend my sincere thanks for your enduring generosity.

With sincere appreciation,

**Pete Batra, MD, FACS, FARS**