

Explorers Course 2025: Surgical & Medical Management of Airway Disease in Otolaryngology

March 27-29, 2025 – Live
The Hythe, Vail, CO

Thursday, March 27			
Start Time	End Time	Session Title & Description	Faculty
4:45 PM	5:15 PM	Registration + Welcome Exhibits Apres	
5:15 PM	5:25 PM	Welcome and Course Overview	Jennifer Villwock, MD, FAAOA
5:25 PM	5:40 PM	Optimizing Your SLIT/SCIT Practice Incorporating allergy into your practice provides a valuable service to patients. That said, optimizing your workflow, support staff setup, and overall best practices for ensuring high impact visits is not necessarily easy of intuitive. Learn from seasoned otolaryngic allergists (one academic and one private practice) on how their practices have evolved over time, the whys behind these changes, and returns on investment for these changes.	Keith Sale, MD, FAAOA Michelle Liu, MD, MPH, FAAOA
5:40 PM	5:55 PM	Allergy's Impact on the Final Sinus: The Ear and Mastoid We will review the common pathophysiology of allergies impact from the nose to the nasopharynx, Eustachian tube, and middle ear and mastoid. Overlooked but important symptoms and disease conditions where allergy treatment is known to improve the clinical course (e.g., Meniere's disease,	Ilka Naumann, MD, FAAOA
5:55 PM	6:10 PM	Immunologic Mechanisms of Allergy Testing & Treatment in the Otology Patient Review of SCIT/SLIT mechanisms and common questions - when to retest? Skin or IgE testing? When should we start seeing improvement in symptoms, especially for ear patients?	Ilka Naumann, MD, FAAOA
6:10 PM	6:25 PM	Pearls for Allergy-Mediated Pediatric Ear Disease We will review key considerations in children with ear disease related to allergy, including how allergy impacts overall health, hearing, and long-term quality of life.	Haidy Marzouk, MD, MBA, FAAOA
6:25 PM	6:40 PM	The Eustachian Tube - Advances in the Understanding of Dysfunction Overview of recent updates in anatomy and function, how this changes over time (childhood to adulthood to impact of aging) of the eustachian tube and causes of dysfunction.	Haidy Marzouk, MD, MBA, FAAOA
6:40 PM	6:55 PM	The Eustachian Tube - Advances in Medical Treatment Allergy management in otologic patients, including pharmacology options, complementary and alternative options, and allergy immunotherapy.	Ilka Naumann, MD, FAAOA
6:55 PM	7:10 PM	The Eustachian Tube - Advances in Procedural Treatment This session provides an overview of the role of eustachian tube dilation, including mechanism of action, how to appropriately select patients and who NOT to dilate, what patients are saying, long term R/B/A, and risk of patulous eustachian tube.	Robert Stachler, MD, FAAOA
7:10 PM	7:25 PM	Practicalities of Billing, Staffing, and Payer Issues with Eustachian Tube Dilation This practical session will discuss how do we set ourselves up for success and minimize hiccups when adding eustachian tube dilation to our practice?	Ilka Naumann, MD, FAAOA
7:25 PM	7:40 PM	Ear Fullness – What to Do When It's Not ETD? This session will discuss other etiologies of ear fullness. Learn what to ask patients and what to consider when their ear fullness is not from ETD	Ilka Naumann, MD, FAAOA
7:40 PM	8:40 PM	Chat and Chew Exhibit Reception	Ilka Naumann, MD, FAAOA Robert Stachler, MD, FAAOA

Friday, March 28			
Start Time	End Time	Session Title & Description	Faculty
5:45 AM	6:00 AM	Coffee	
Cough & Larynx Block			
6:00 AM	6:15 AM	Overview of Cough This is your chance to learn about the nuances of cough that you may not have learned in your residency. The role that allergy plays in the treatment and management of a patient with cough will be covered.	Robert Stachler, MD, FAAOA
6:15 AM	6:30 AM	Essentials in Adult Cough Workup (AKA What Not to Miss) Do you have a diagnostic workflow for your chronic cough patients? If not, this is your chance to create and optimize yours. We will review key components of a comprehensive workup and what not to miss.	Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAOA
6:30 AM	6:45 AM	Fundamentals in Pediatric Cough Workup (AKA What Not to Miss) When is a cough not just a cough? What is our role as otolaryngologists in advanced evaluation and management of pediatric cough? We'll review pediatric cough diagnostic workflows and apply them to patient cases.	Daniel Chelius, MD
6:45 AM	7:00 AM	Evidence-Based Treatment of Chronic Cough A cough-treatment algorithm will be reviewed. In-the office procedures for cough will also be discussed.	Robert Stachler, MD, FAAOA
7:00 AM	7:30 AM	Chat & Chew with Exhibitors	
7:30 AM	7:55 AM	Case Wrap-Up: Patient with Cough The following panel will review the previous discussions about cough and its relevant contributors in both children and adults. It will include an interactive case review with input from the faculty members and the attendees.	Robert Stachler, MD, FAAOA; Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAOA, John Krouse, MD, PhD, MBA, FAAOA (virtual)
7:55 AM	8:25 AM	Superior Laryngeal Nerve Block — Role in Cough and Laryngeal Irritation The anatomy and physiology of superior laryngeal nerve block will be reviewed. Indications, beyond chronic cough, will be discussed. Laryngeal landmarks and US guidance to aid in successful injection will be reviewed with hands-on demonstration of a mock-injection, and opportunities for attendees to practice mock injections on each other, will conclude the session.	Robert Stachler, MD, FAAOA
8:25 AM	8:40 AM	Physiology of Taste & Smell Among its many societal impacts, COVID-19 put olfaction on the map and on everyone's radar! Learn about the physiology of smell and taste, and what we have learned since the pandemic about these special senses.	Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAOA
8:40 AM	8:55 AM	Assessment of Smell Disorders Explore the subjective and quantifiable measures of olfactory performance and the hows and whys of why you may want to incorporate them into your practice.	Jennifer Villwock, MD, FAAOA
8:55 AM	9:10 AM	Treatment of Smell Disorders This session will provide a contemporary overview of treatment options for patients with olfactory dysfunction. This includes updated data for known options such as olfactory training as well as what the emerging evidence is revealing about the efficacy of newer treatments such as stellate ganglion block, platelet rich plasma injections, and ongoing clinical trials	Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAOA
9:10 AM	10:10 AM	Non-AAOA Satellite Event	
10:10 AM	3:30 PM	Mid-Day Break	
3:30 PM	4:00 PM	APRES SKI with Exhibitors	

Friday, March 28			
Start Time	End Time	Session Title & Description	Faculty
Asthma Block			
4:00 PM	4:20 PM	Asthma, Allergy, & the Unified Airway Clinician experience and research both demonstrate the importance of considering both the upper and lower airway when managing patients with airway disease. This unified airway approach is important due to shared pathogenesis and expression of diseases manifesting in the airway. This lecture will review evidence that supports this model of disease and discuss the core role of airway inflammation as the underlying mechanism for these common diseases.	John Krouse, MD, PhD, MBA, FAAAA (virtual)
4:20 PM	4:35 PM	Cough Symptoms in Children – Allergies, Asthma, or Something Else? Cough is a common and nonspecific symptom in children. A correct diagnosis is critical. In this session, cough secondary to allergies and/or asthma and appropriate treatment will be discussed. Alternative diagnoses to consider (e.g. laryngomalacia, lesions) that can cause cough in children and where these fit in the airway diagnostic algorithm will also be reviewed.	Daniel Chelius, MD
4:35 PM	5:05 PM	Spirometry in Clinic Spirometry can add significant value by providing objective data on pulmonary function. We will review flow-volume loops, critical values to look for on PFT outputs, and what qualifies as an adequate test. Pros and cons of screening spirometry versus pre- and post-bronchodilator will be discussed. The tail end of this session will include real-life spirometry demonstration.	Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAAA
5:05 PM	5:20 PM	Chat & Chew with Exhibitors	
5:20 PM	5:35 PM	Evidence-Based Asthma Treatment Guidelines Asthma treatment is continually evolving. We will review the newest evidence-based treatment guidelines and their implications for management. Differences between GINA and NAEPP guidelines will be briefly discussed. Spoiler alert – no more albuterol alone! This lecture will review various measures that are important in the initial and ongoing assessment of the patient with asthma.	Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAAA
5:35 PM	5:50 PM	The Common Asthma & Allergy Case: What Are We Missing? We all see allergy and airway patients in clinic. In this session, we will dig deeper into a seemingly common case to further optimize the patient's care and outcomes.	John Krouse, MD, PhD, MBA, FAAAA (virtual); Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAAA, Haidy Marzouk, MD, MBA, FAAAA
5:50 PM	6:05 PM	The Complex Asthma & Allergy Case: What Else to Consider? In this more complicated case with suboptimal response to first-line therapies, we will discuss additional options, including when biologics are indicated.	Dana Crosby, MD, MPH, FAAAA
6:05 PM	6:20 PM	Need to Know - OSA This session reviews the pathophysiology of OSA in both children and adults, including populations with special needs (e.g., Down Syndrome). Downstream sequelae of untreated OSA are briefly explored, as well as overview of indications for treatment	Christine DeMason, MD, FAAAA
6:20 PM	6:40 PM	Chat & Chew with Exhibitors	
6:40 PM	6:55 PM	AHI — Always Having Inhalant Allergies? This session will review how inhalant/environmental allergies can impact presentation, manifestation, and clinical course of patients with OSA.	Alpen Patel, MD, FAAAA
6:55 PM	7:10 PM	Mouthing-Breathing Kids — What to Do When It's Not Sleep Apnea? This session will discuss non-OSA causes of mouth-breathing in kids and how to treat them. This includes allergic contributions to mouth-breathing and snoring as well the potential contributions of hot topics like ankyloglossia.	Daniel Chelius, MD

Friday, March 28

Start Time	End Time	Session Title & Description	Faculty
7:10 PM	7:25 PM	<p>Allergy Treatment and OSA — What Should We be Counseling Patients about? Optimizing allergy treatment in patients with both OSA and allergy can positively impact inflammatory profiles, symptoms, and quality of life. We will review the evidence on how treatment of inhalant allergies – including pharmacologic and immunotherapy – impact sleep apnea. We will also discuss treatment modalities that can impact sleep (e.g. antihistamines, leukotriene-receptor antagonists) and how we should be counseling our allergic sleep apnea patients</p>	Alpen Patel, MD, FAAOA
7:25 PM	7:40 PM	<p>Beyond the AHI - Best Practices in OSA Testing and Interpretation This session provides an overview of OSA testing modalities. This lecture will highlight critical parameters and what to look for. We will also review indications for DISE in pediatric and adult populations. A brief overview of up-and-coming assessment methods such as home wearable devices will also be provided.</p>	Christine DeMason, MD, FAAOA
7:40 PM	7:55 PM	<p>On the Horizon for Sleep Apnea Treatment This session provides a contemporary review of novel and up-and-coming sleep apnea treatments, including tirzpetide (and potential role for other GLP-1 agonist); hypoglossal nerve stimulator, cryolipolysis, AD109, acetazolamide, more aggressive allergy treatment</p>	Christine DeMason, MD, FAAOA
7:55 PM	8:10 PM	<p>Establishing OSA-Focused Practice: Staffing, Billing, Logistics, Pre-Authorization This talk will review the hows, whens, and whys of incorporating OSA diagnosis and management into your practice.</p>	Alpen Patel, MD, FAAOA
8:10 PM	8:25 PM	<p>When Snoring Isn't Sleep Apnea...What's the Plan Now? Not all that snores is sleep apnea. For patients who snore, what does the evidence show for next best steps in management once sleep apnea has been ruled out?</p>	Christine DeMason, MD, FAAOA

Saturday, March 29			
Start Time	End Time	Session Title & Description	Faculty
5:45 AM	6:00 AM	Coffee	
New and Emerging Topics			
6:00 AM	6:15 AM	<p>How Climate and Environmental Extremes Are Changing Allergy Wondering how environmental extremes, climate changes, and natural disasters are impacting our allergy patients? Are allergens getting more potent? What about allergy “seasons”? Then this lecture is for you! We will review how environmental factors are changing plant allergen release and potency, how wildfires and other airborne particulate matters are impacting the airway, and what we can expect going forward.</p>	William Reisacher, MD, FAAOA
6:15 AM	6:30 AM	<p>Allergy and Geriatric Medicine — Clinical Presentation of Allergy Can older individuals present with new sensitivities and allergies? How can allergies evolve over time? Why don’t allergies get better with age and “immunosenescence”? What are the first-line treatment options and how well do they work? Find answers to these questions and more in this session.</p>	Michelle Liu, MD, MPH, FAAOA
6:30 AM	6:45 AM	<p>Allergy and Geriatric Medicine — Treatment Considerations and Polypharmacy Many of our older patients are on multiple medications and supplements. This session will overview key considerations in medically managing allergies in this population, including drug interactions and side effects to be most on the lookout for.</p>	Keith Sale, MD, FAAOA
6:45 AM	7:00 AM	<p>Is My Patient Too Old for Immunotherapy? In this session, we review the evidence for the efficacy of immunotherapy in older individuals.</p>	Michelle Liu, MD, MPH, FAAOA
7:00 AM	7:15 AM	<p>Food Allergy or Additive Sensitivity? The specific reason for adverse reactions to consumed food products are not always straightforward to identify. This diagnostic challenge is compounded by the plethora of food additives that are available, many of which are derived from antigenic foods. We will review the literature regarding food additive sensitivities and key questions to ask your patients as part of your potential food allergy workup.</p>	William Reisacher, MD, FAAOA
7:15 AM	7:30 AM	<p>Fact or Fiction: New Allergies in Transplant Patients How do you respond when a patient tells you, “I had a transplant and it seems like now I have new and worse allergies?” Learn about the pathophysiology of allergies post-transplant and which transplants are associated with transfer of allergies or new ones.</p>	Keith Sale, MD, FAAOA
7:30 AM	8:00 AM	Chat & Chew with Exhibitors	
8:00 AM	8:20 AM	<p>Saturday Slime Lab We will reinforce key immunology concepts using slime-making elements. Glue is the mucous, activator is the histamine, special add ins are the antigens. Let your nerdy and creative juices flow as we see who can create the best slime — and explain the allergic cascade happening within.</p>	Jennifer Villwock, MD, FAAOA
8:20 AM	8:40 AM	<p>Complimentary & Alternative Medicine in the Treatment of Allergy From local pollen and honey to acupuncture, what does the evidence show regarding efficacy for these treatments for allergies, eczema, and asthma? Find out in this session so you are prepared to discuss these increasingly popular and talked about options.</p>	Haidy Marzouk, MD, MBA, FAAOA

Saturday, March 29

Start Time	End Time	Session Title & Description	Faculty
8:40 AM	8:55 AM	Chat & Chew with Exhibitors	
8:55 AM	9:10 AM	<p>Diagnosing Antibiotic Allergy and Why It's Important Improving antibiotic stewardship is a global initiative. Many patients receive a label of penicillin-allergic for reasons ranging from vague history of reaction as a child to severe reaction in a family member. Learn the incidence of penicillin and antibiotic allergy, if patients grow out of these allergies, and risks associated with not delabeling.</p>	William Reisacher, MD, FAAOA
9:10 AM	9:25 AM	<p>Impact of Drug Allergy Desensitization Protocols on Patients and Health Systems We will review the workflow for penicillin allergy delabeling. The impact of implementing these workflows, and where we are otolaryngic allergists can fit in, will be discussed. A brief discussion of the costs and benefits will be presented for those interested in potentially incorporating penicillin allergy delabeling into their practice.</p>	Keith Sale, MD, FAAOA