Future of Otology Practices in Canada: Shifting Towards Academic Centres?

Stephen H. Chen, Ph.D., Hosam A. Amoodi, M.D., Joseph M. Chen, M.D., Julian M. Nedzelski, M.D., and Vincent Y.W. Lin, M.D.

Department of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery, Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

Objectives/Hypothesis:
To examine current scope of otology practices among otolaryngologists in Canada and to assess for trends of practice preference.

Study Design:
Cross-sectional study using both paper and web-based questionnaires.

Method:
Questionnaires were sent to all active otolaryngologists registered with the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology. Results were collated and analyzed.

Results:
164 otolaryngologists in Canada participated in the survey. Average age of respondents is 46.2 years old. Nearly 90% of respondents completed their residency training in Canada, while 24% completed further fellowship training in otology. As expected, respondents with otology-fellowship training have higher percentage of otology in their practice. Most of the respondents without otology fellowship training who practice only in the community or at academic centres dedicate less than 50% of practice in otology. In fact, a great majority of respondents who practice only in the community perform 0 or fewer than 5 cases of tympanoplasty, ossiculoplasty, stapedotomy, mastoidectomy and revision mastoidectomy in a week. Interestingly, there is a trend for proportions of respondents who completed residency more recently to perform fewer cases of tympanoplasty, ossiculoplasty, stapedotomy, mastoidectomy and revision mastoidectomy than their older colleagues.

Scope of Otology Practice

Years of residency completion vs. otology practice amongst non-otology-fellowship-trained otolaryngologists

Community vs. Academic Centres

% otology practice amongst otolaryngologists in who spend either 0% or 100% in academic centres

Discussion

There exists a diversity of otology practice amongst otolaryngologists in Canada, and certain trends emerged from this study. Those who practice solely in the community are less likely to have a significant otology in their practice. Further, there is a tendency for younger otolaryngologists in Canada to practice less otology. This study raises many questions about current otology training and otologic case referrals:

1. Otology in Canada is now shifting away from primary practice to academic centres - what are the implications for patient care and accessibility?
2. Younger generations of otolaryngologists are performing less otology - are there potential future manpower issues?
3. Is this shift a result of training? Do residents feel confident performing ossiculoplasty, stapedotomy, and mastoidectomy when they graduate?
4. Do we need to re-visit the “expected” competencies of graduating residents?
5. Is the new “standard of care” for otology to have them performed by fellowship-trained otolaryngologists?