INTRODUCTION

The passage of the Affordable Care Act and renewed political focus on the economics of the health care industry in the United States raise questions regarding the composition of the physician workforce and the continued viability of specialization in the field of otolaryngology. Various studies have shown that demand for otolaryngologists already outpaces supply, a problem that will only be exacerbated over time. In addition, academic opportunities have increased as a result of the changing composition of the otolaryngology workforce, increasing patient demand, and fluctuating size of academic health care systems. Our study is the first to address these issues in over a decade. The purpose of this article is to better characterize the role of otolaryngologists already outpaces supply, a problem that will only be exacerbated over time.

METHODS

- Cross-sectional study.
- Survey evaluated past, present, and projected hiring issues in academic otolaryngology, specifically related to general otolaryngology.
- Surveys were sent via e-mail to all academic chairpersons of accredited otolaryngology residency programs in the United States from January to June 2014.
- Data included faculty appointments, work hours, clinical and research roles, academic productivity, patient load, promotions, and criteria for future hires.
- Response rate: 34%.

RESULTS

Our study is the first to address these issues in over a decade. The purpose of this article is to better characterize the role of academic general otolaryngology in the face of today's changing medical landscape.

DISCUSSION

Our study indicates that despite the fluctuations in supply, the need for academic general otolaryngologists continues to increase. Despite the increase in subspecialization and in the number of residents pursuing fellowships, our study demonstrates a present and continuing demand for general otolaryngologists in academic practices, for the purposes of both general otolaryngology cases and providing a referral base for subspecialists. In addition, nearly half of promotions were given to generalists, indicating that fellowships may not be necessary for a successful academic career.

LIMITATIONS

- Modest survey response rate.
- Reliance on opinions and reports of responding chairpersons, which is not verifiable by another measure.
- Representation of only one point in time, although the survey considered past and current trends of each practice.

CONCLUSION

Despite the increase in subspecialization in academic otolaryngology, faculty positions and professional success are, and will continue to be, available to general otolaryngologists, despite any perception to the contrary.

REFERENCES