



**AMERICAN SOCIETY  
OF PEDIATRIC  
OTOLARYNGOLOGY**

## *President's Report*

Dear ASPO Members,

It is a pleasure and honor to serve as your president. This newsletter is an opportunity for the ASPO leadership to reflect on where we stand as an organization and to update you on new developments. I want to start by recognizing Diego Preciado, Past President, for navigating our society through the challenges posed by the introduction of the first complex pediatric otolaryngology (CPO) sub-certification. By the time this newsletter is published, many of us would have taken the CPO examination and are one stage closer to sub-certification in Pediatric Otolaryngology. This is a milestone in our society's evolution and enables us to continue to foster excellence in the care of children with ENT disorders.



ASPO continues to be financially healthy and is able to strongly support research and education. The pandemic has limited our ability to have face-to-face meetings, which has decreased income from meeting attendance. Fortunately, our endowment funds have continued to grow and support operations. Our partnership with ACS is strong and has limited our liabilities for cancelled and rescheduled meetings. The 2022 ASPO Spring and Summer meetings are being organized with enthusiasm by our program committees led by Robert Chun and Meredith Merz Lind. We hope to have both meetings in person, though only time will tell. We continue to discuss options with COSM/ACS and will communicate with you as we know more.

We have a strong board with committees that are working hard to continue the business of ASPO. The goal this year is to "normalize" and strengthen ASPO's operations. Our membership continues to grow in the USA, Canada and internationally. We have an Ad Hoc: Private Practice Committee led by Jim Thompson looking at how ASPO can support, advocate, and increase member participation. We are also looking at including a membership category for Advanced Practice Practitioners (APPs) in ASPO. The Education and Fellowship Committees have put together an exciting program of presentations that I highly recommend you look into and participate in. We are also discussing strategic planning for ASPO that will make our society stronger and able to meet the needs of our growing and diverse membership, especially our young members. In addition, we continue to foster our important strategic relationships with our peer organizations including AAO, AAP, ACS, SENTAC, and COSM.

I am confident that ASPO will continue to lead the world of Pediatric Otolaryngology. I would like to thank the membership for the opportunity to serve you. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or ideas.

Ron Mitchell, MD

[Ron.Mitchell@UTSouthwestern.edu](mailto:Ron.Mitchell@UTSouthwestern.edu)

# ASPO Leadership

## Board Members

**President:**

Ron Mitchell, MD

**President Elect:**

Julie Wei, MD

**Past President:**

Diego Preciado, MD

**Secretary:**

Reza Rahbar, MD

**Treasurer:**

Peggy Kelley, MD

**Directors at Large:**

Sanjay Parikh, MD

Romaine Johnson, MD

Sam Daniel, MD

## Committee Chairs

**Board of Governors:**

Daniel Chelius, MD

**Bylaws:**

Anna Messner, MD

**Development:**

Deepak Mehta, MD

**Education and Curriculum:**

Anita Jeyakumar, MD

**Finance:**

Peggy Kelley, MD

**Fellowship:**

Gopi Shah, MD

**Information Technology:**

Kay Chang, MD

**International:**

Tulio Valdez, MD

**Membership:**

Kevin Pereira, MD

**Newsletter:**

Laura Neff, MD

**Nominating:**

Diego Preciado

**Program:**

Bob Chun, MD

**Quality and Safety:**

Jennifer Lavin, MD

**Research:**

David Chi, MD

**Young Members:**

Allison Dobbie, MD

**Ad Hoc Summer Meeting:**

Meredith Lind, MD

**Ad Hoc COVID-19:**

Scott Rickert, MD

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# Past President's Report

Dear ASPO Members, Friends and Colleagues,

As we head into the 2021-22 fall season, I wanted to take a moment through this newsletter to reflect on where we stand as a Society and muse on topics regarding our future. Last year in many respects was an inflection point, a sort of cross-road for our specialty. Not only figuratively marking the start of a new numerical decade, but also the beginning of an era of rapid virtual interconnectivity in the midst of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic which grounded our collective operations to a halt - all while at the same time embarking into a pathway for a new and controversial subcertification process for complex pediatric otolaryngology. Never I could have imagined that the year I was tasked with leading the ASPO Board would be so disruptive. That being said, as I reflect back, the entirety of the experience was enormously humbling and rewarding. I had the enormous privilege over the year of meeting with broad swaths of our members, to learn about their perspectives regarding what ASPO represents to them, and how it could be better. We also saw a large contingent of ASPO members come together from all corners of our specialty to offer constructive feedback and sage thoughts regarding sub-certification, eventually convincing the ABOHNS to implement changes which overall improved the process. Conversations regarding the global pandemic and how each of our groups was coping, sharing best practices, support, and camaraderie undoubtedly brought all of us together as never before.



At this critical inflection juncture, the ASPO Board has indeed had the opportunity to do some introspection. It is likely a good time to re-evaluate our mission and goals, while considering a new strategic plan for the future. We all want our Society to grow, to continue on a path for inclusivity, to increase value for all members, disseminate innovative research and education, and most importantly, to provide leadership for our subspecialty across the globe. We are blessed with an amazing slate of new leaders for our Board, all of whom are selflessly committed to this idea of reappraisal and growth. As members, I am convinced we will all immensely benefit from their wisdom and efforts. I could not personally be more excited for the next 5 years as we come out of this pandemic and rebound to a stronger and more connected world. From the inception of ASPO in 1985, to the creation of the first fellowship training programs, to ACGME accreditation for fellowships, to ABOHNS board subcertification status, complex pediatric otolaryngology has greatly matured as a subspecialty. It has been the honor of the lifetime to have participated on our Board as a leader over the past year. Thanks to all of you who gave me advice, criticism, and direction. I look to the future with renewed energy and with a great spirit for what's to come!

Respectfully,

Diego Preciado, MD, PhD  
[dpreciad@cnmc.org](mailto:dpreciad@cnmc.org)

# Secretary's Report

It has been my pleasure and honor to continue my role as the Secretary of ASPO in the past three years. My goal has been to provide transparency and to be a conduit of information for ASPO's activities to all the membership and at the same time represent ASPO's interests at the COSM and other national and international societies. The following information is a summation of some of ASPO's activities.



## Membership:

ASPO membership continues to grow. We currently have a total of 784 members.

- Fellow Members: 84
- International Members: 58
- Our goal is to seek out all fellowship programs and engage all our graduating fellows as early as possible. With the help of the International Committee, we are also advocating to increase our international outreach to continue ASPO's role as a leader in the international pediatric ORL from an educational, advocacy, and clinical care perspective.

## Education/Fellowship:

- ASPO fellowship programs continue to grow. We currently have 37 fellowship training programs (29 ACGME accredited) offering 49 fellowship spots.
- The ASPO fellowship committee organized the COVID-19 fellowship lectures with great success (they can be viewed on the website).

## Website:

- We are working closely with the American College of Surgeons and ASPO IT Committee to continue to update the new website platform. Please continue to give us feedback. and be sure all your relevant/contact information are up to date

## Research/Grant:

- ASPO continues to provide financial support/grant to advance both clinical and basis science research in our field. ASPO has provided support for the total of 784,976 dollars since 2005.
- ASPO Research Committee as part of the CORE Grant Submission Process has approved the following research projects in the 2021 Cycle.
  - ASPO Career Development Award: The role of mTORC1 in the development of acquired airway stenosis (Christian Hochstim, MD, PhD)
- ASPO Research Grant
  - Breast milk feeding and the middle ear microbiome of children with cleft palate (Amber Shaffer, PhD)
  - Development of Novel Viral vectors for Inner Ear Gene Therapy (Osama Tarabichi, MD)

## Financial:

- ASPO remains on solid financial ground both from an operations and investment perspective.

I do hope to hear from you on what we are doing right and most importantly how I/we can improve our process and serve you better on our core missions of advocacy, education and patient care. Please feel free to email me directly with any suggestions or questions.

Reza Rahbar DMD, MD

[reza.rahbar@childrens.harvard.edu](mailto:reza.rahbar@childrens.harvard.edu)

# Committee Reports

## Program Committee

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We are pleased to announce our excitement to provide a program for our first IN PERSON meeting in two years! Dr Mitchell and I have worked on a theme of "resilience and reunion" for our program. These last two years have been difficult for us all, but with our resilience and the help of science we have persevered to be here today.

We are excited to bring three keynote speakers to our annual meeting this year. Dr Rana Awdish, the author of *In Shock*, describes her personal struggles with her own health and how she has persevered and found meaning to her own tragedy, to teach the necessity of compassionate care.



Dr. Leonard Marcus is the founding Director of the Program for Health Care Negotiation and Conflict Resolution at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and founding Co-Director of the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative. He is an expert in "Meta Leadership" leadership where Meta-leaders develop high self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-regulation. They build the capacity to confront fear and lead themselves and others out of the "emotional basement" to higher levels of thinking and functioning.

Finally, Dr. Tania Sih, founding member of IAPO will reflect on her passion to educate and provide high quality medical care around the world.

We have already closed out submissions for our mini seminars and abstracts, and are excited to bring back our peer reviewed panels, podium, quickshot, and poster presentations. We are also introducing a new series on "Mastered surgical techniques in Pediatric Otolaryngology", a fantastic innovation from Dr. Modi.

We thank our colleagues and members for taking the time to submit their abstracts, and we look forward to meeting again to celebrate our reunion of friendships and presenting our research and innovations for our patients.

Bob Chun  
Program Committee Chair  
[rchun@mcw.edu](mailto:rchun@mcw.edu)

## Summer Program Committee

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I am honored to be writing to you as the Program Committee Chair for the 2022 ASPO Summer Meeting. We are so excited to see everyone in person July 15-20, in Vail, CO. As those who have attended previously know, this meeting is a fantastic opportunity to learn about innovations in Pediatric Otolaryngology and to enjoy the huge variety of summer activities in Vail. This year, we look forward to an exciting scientific program, with education focusing on issues in physician wellness and self-care. Please mark your calendars and bring your families to join us for the meeting and the afternoon activities- hiking, biking, white water rafting, and relaxing at the pool. It really is the perfect place and the perfect time of year. We hope to see everyone in July!

Meredith Lind, MD  
Summer Committee Chair  
[Meredith.Lind@nationwidechildrens.org](mailto:Meredith.Lind@nationwidechildrens.org)



## Membership Committee

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The application cycle for ASPO membership is open and will run from August 1, to Jan 31 (6 months). In past years, we had problems with incomplete applications due to the online application form allowing one to proceed without filling in some of the tabs. This resulted in many applications reaching our desk after the cycle had closed and we were left trying to contact individuals for information. This year there is a hard stop on the online application at each tab which will not allow continuing without filling the required information. We are monitoring applications on a real time basis this year to identify any issues that need clarification or help.

With the CPO having a practice pathway which runs until 2030, we are working with the board of directors to determine any changes to the by-laws which could allow those who pass the CPO exam but are not fellowship trained as currently required to acquire membership if they fulfill all other requirements. We are working with the International and Fellowship Committees to identify potential applicants who are eligible for membership and send them e-mails highlighting the benefits of joining the ASPO. Emails were sent to all 2021 graduating fellows and this year's entrants regarding fellow membership. The letter has a link to the membership portal. Fellowship directors were contacted to help with identifying former fellows for full membership. There are several academic faculties in pediatric otolaryngology who are not yet ASPO members. Directors of Pediatric ENT programs were requested encourage their faculty who are not members to join the society.



We are looking at ways to engage pediatric otolaryngologists in private practice to increase membership and participation in that domain. Some of the ideas reviewed by the committee were to have sessions in

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the annual scientific program that are directed towards private practice and to have panels and mini seminars to discuss issues relevant to their work. As always, we are willing to help international applicants especially those from countries without pediatric otolaryngologists with reference letters if otherwise eligible for membership. The application fee for international applicants has been reduced to \$50.

Thank you to our committee members who are actively engaged in expanding membership with great ideas and participating in our various endeavors. We would appreciate ideas and suggestions from the general membership on how to increase membership and add value to it.

Kevin D. Pereira, MD  
Membership Committee Chair  
KPereira@som.umaryland.edu

## ***Research Committee***

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The Research Committee has two main goals. We continue work with CORE regarding ASPO grants. This year, the ASPO Career Development Award (\$40,000) was given to Dr. Christian Hochstim for “The role of mTORC1 in the development of acquired airway stenosis.” Two ASPO Grants (\$20,000, each) were awarded to: 1) Dr. Osama Tarchichi for, “Development of novel viral vectors for inner ear gene therapy” 2) Dr. Amber Shaffer for, “Breast milk feeding and the middle ear microbiome of children with cleft palate.”

The committee has continued to be active in reviewing surveys for ASPO. Four surveys have been approved and will be distributed to the membership and four additional surveys are awaiting revisions by authors. The committee has streamlined the survey review process to have three annual submission periods and reviews. This will help facilitate the reviews.



We thank the current committee members, Drs. Randal Bly, Amal Isaiah, Romaine Johnson, Carol Liu, Robert O'Reilly, and Doug Sidell. We also want to recognize the two outgoing members, Drs. Tandy Chiang and Adele Evans, for their work with the committee.

We remind all ASPO members to take a few moments and complete the surveys when they are distributed.

David Chi, MD  
Research Committee - Chair  
[David.Chi@chp.edu](mailto:David.Chi@chp.edu)

## Information Technology Committee

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The Information Technology Committee is assessing ways to partner with other ASPO committees to create more content for our ASPO website. Examples include: (1) a partnership with the Education Committee to recruit content experts who will create 20 to 30 minute presentations of key pediatric otolaryngology problems which will be converted into podcasts; (2) a partnership with the Quality and Safety Committee to provide evidence based protocols and patient educational materials that would be available for download; and (3) a partnership with the Program Committee to choose exceptional content that could be downloaded from the ASPO website, one example being organizing "How I Do It" videos to create a permanent library accessible to ASPO members.



The IT Committee welcomes any suggestions from interested ASPO members for more ideas of how we can make the ASPO website even more useful for its members.

Kay Chang, MD  
Information Technology Committee Chair  
[kaychang@stanford.edu](mailto:kaychang@stanford.edu)

## Education Committee

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The Education and Curriculum Committee had updated several resources for use by fellows and members. In the winter of 2019-2020, members of the committee reviewed and updated the ASPO Reading List. This is a list of classic and impactful articles that the committee selected as benchmark readings for Pediatric Otolaryngology fellows and other Otolaryngology trainees and providers. The updated Reading List has now been published and can be found here: <http://aspo.us/readinglist>. For our members who prefer to watch educational content, the fellow lecture series (<https://aspo.us/page/covid19-fellow-lecture-series>) is an incredible resource to watch (with slides) or listen to on the go.



With the official announcement on initiation of the Complex Pediatric Otolaryngology Certification, the Education and Curriculum Committee has begun working on other resources and education material to support our membership in preparation for the Certification examination. Look for more information on our exciting initiatives in the coming months!

Anita Jeyakumar, MD  
Education Committee Chair  
[AJeyakumar@akronchildrens.org](mailto:AJeyakumar@akronchildrens.org)



## ***Fellowship Committee***

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For the 2021 Pediatric Oto match, there were 37 programs offering 49 fellowship spots. Of the 49 fellowship spots, 17 spots did not match, and 15 programs were unfilled of whom 2 were partially filled.

The new Pedi Oto fellowship application cycle is open via SF Match with the final date of submission being January 15, 2022. The interviews will be virtual in 2022, and the fellowship committee has collected fellowship interview dates for most of the programs none of which overlap thus far. The dates will be put on the ASPO website. Please check out the AAMC website for resources for virtual interviews.

This year, the fellowship committee is working with the education committee to have a few lectures for all fellows and program directors on topics including teaching, job search and multi-disciplinary practice. We are also working on a Pre-ASPO/COSM pedi oto meeting for all medical students and trainees interested in pedi oto. This will be in person with a virtual option in Dallas.

Our committee is open to questions, feedback, and suggestions so please let us know how we can help

Gopi Shah, MD  
Fellowship Committee Chair  
[gopi.shah@utsouthwestern.edu](mailto:gopi.shah@utsouthwestern.edu)



## ***International Committee***

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The International Committee is starting its second year as a standing committee and continues making progress on several fronts. The pandemic has reinforced the importance of being connected to our international community. The ASPO board of directors has approved two awards of \$4000 each year for the ASPO Visiting International Scholar / Sylvan Stool Travel Award. These will assist the scholars with travel expenses to attend the ASPO meeting and spend time as an observer in pediatric otolaryngology at a tertiary care children's hospital. The ASPO board and relevant committees will identify the institutions, and meeting registration will be waived for the awardees.



We greatly appreciated the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Kevin Pereira, MD, and the membership committee and look forward to a record number of international applicants this year. We will partner with the membership committee to give guidance and help many of them navigate the application process. We are continuing to work on expanding our international footprint. Two of our committee members, Wei Chung Hsu, M.D., and Hugo Rodriguez, M.D., are leading efforts in Asia and Latin America to engage with new potential members.

We plan to create a repository of speakers interested in lecturing at international meetings/courses/conferences and those with ideas for global scientific collaboration. We invite suggestions from the membership on ways to increase international membership and attendance at our meetings to enhance educational and research cooperation worldwide.

Tulio Valdez, MD  
International Committee Chair  
[tvaldez1@stanford.edu](mailto:tvaldez1@stanford.edu)

## ASPO Member Spotlight

### Romaine Johnson, MD

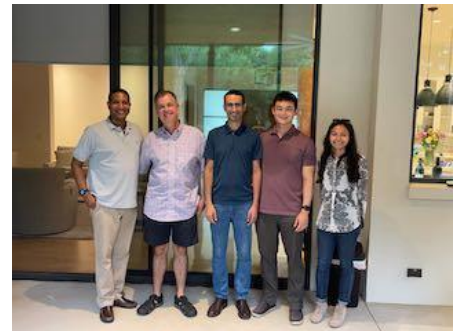
#### Tell us a little about yourself:

I currently live in Dallas, Texas, where I am on the faculty at UT Southwestern Medical Center. I practice at Children's Medical Center Dallas and focus on pediatric airway, voice, and swallowing disorders. I do not have any particular hobbies but enjoy spending time with my immediate family (wife, two children, and mother-in-law). We go to the movies, restaurants, concerts, sporting events, and so forth. We try to take advantage of having memorable experiences, so if Lady Gaga or Hamilton is coming to town, we're going.



#### How did you decide on peds ENT?

I was drawn to pediatric otolaryngology during my Baylor College of Medicine residency when I spent time at Texas Children's Hospital. I became good friends with Ellen Friedmann, Marcie Sulek, and Carla Gianonni. It was their friendship and mentoring that led me towards pediatric practice. I also loved the airway, which seemed to fit nicely with my interests.



#### Any tips on starting/maintaining a successful multidisciplinary aerodigestive clinic?

With most endeavors, the biggest part is showing up and doing the work - willingness to see the patients and perform surgery on those who need it. The logistics of setting up your practice will be institution-specific. But the key is putting in the work. Remember, the first rule of medical practice is picking up the phone.



#### What advice do you have to current pediatric ENT fellows?

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As Peter Drucker aptly stated, to achieve excellence, you must learn to manage yourself. You have to figure out your strengths, values, and performance style in order to make the contributions to the specialty you deem important. There will be little guidance once you go out into practice. You can always reach out to others, but in general, you are expected to be independent. You decide which patients you will see, which surgeries you will perform, whether you are active in committees or national societies, and if you contribute original research to the scientific literature.

I have a saying, "if you work hard but there is no evidence of your hard work, do you really work hard?" This is especially true in academic practice. Having a record of achievement is critical. These achievements are primarily peer-reviewed publications, but presentations also count. So, create a writing accountability group among your peers and aim to publish around four peer-reviewed articles a year. I meet once a month with my partners to discuss and encourage their writing projects. Also, consistently submit presentations to national meetings. Lastly, mentor, mentor, mentor - although an individual decides to act or not to act, those who want to achieve excellence will occasionally reach out to you. Take their call, have that lunch meeting, and do the sit down in-between course lectures. A 10-minute conversation can literally change the trajectory of someone's career. And when speaking in public, represent the best in the specialty, for you never know how your words will impact others.



## **Brianne Roby, MD**

### **Tell us a little about yourself:**

I grew up in South Dakota, oldest of 3 girls. I went to both medical school and residency at University of Minnesota. I am avid runner (multiple marathons, now training for spring 2022 Boston marathon). I was a competitive golfer in the past (no longer...just average now). Also love all things outdoors: hiking, paddle boarding, kayaking. Mission work is very important to me, including being on the board of directors for Children's Surgery International. I try to do at least 1 mission trip/year and have done that since my children were really young. I have a 10 year old daughter and 6 year old son.



**How did you decide on peds ENT?**

I started doing research with Jim Sidman when I was in medical school. It wasn't hard to want to follow in his footsteps.

**What did you enjoy the most about being involved with the fellowship committee for ASPO?**

I loved every minute participating on and then chairing the fellowship committee. I learned so much from the other amazing fellowship directors around the country: how they were working to improve fellowships, education, milestones, career development. I feel like I now have colleagues all around the country I can call for advice, referrals, transfer of patients, etc.

**What advice do you have to current pediatric ENT fellows?**

Be willing to consider job opportunities that you may not have initially considered. Sometimes it's the job you least expect that will allow you to have the greatest career.



# ASPO – Get Involved!

ASPO Leadership has made it clear – they want to increase ASPO’s membership, diversity and representation! Ever wonder how to get involved and/or how the nominating process works? Here’s the run down:

The Nominating committee is composed of 4 members elected by voting members of ASPO and the immediate Past-President for a total of 5 members. The Nominating committee accepts nominations for the Board and makes recommendations to the President Elect.

## **Board:**

The Board is composed of: President, Past President, Past Past President, Secretary, Treasurer, Director at Large (3).

## **Committees:**

To apply to be on a committee, there is an application that can be found on the ASPO website (this process typically starts in January): <https://aspo.us/page/committees>

Each committee has 7 members (6 members and 1 chair). The chairs of each committee are listed on Page 2 of the newsletter. The **chair** of a committee is selected by the President from the existing committee members. The committee members are chosen by the President Elect.

## **Term Lengths:**

**Committee Member:** 3 years

**Committee Chair:** 2 years

**Secretary:** 4 years

**Treasurer:** 4 Years

**President:** 1 year

**Directors at Large:** 3 years