### Abstract

Objectives
1. Examine attrition within a cohort of otolaryngology residents via web-based survey of program directors
2. Explore strategies to minimize attrition

Methods
A web-based survey was sent to 97 otolaryngology residency program directors regarding a five-year cohort of residents (intern class of 2000 through the intern class of 2004). Residents who did not complete training were counted. Questions explored new or different potential strategies to minimize attrition, especially for those residents who are struggling to meet program expectations.

Results
A total of 59 responses were received, with 42% returning surveys. The data indicates a relatively consistent over the past 6 years. Surgical fields experience higher rates of attrition than those fields with a primary care orientation. Training in a 5-year surgical specialty, in general surgery, election to positions (63 percent).

Conclusion
The findings highlight the importance of understanding resident attrition and identifying strategies to address it. The evolution of general surgery training may allow for improved problem recognition and generate possible solutions.

### Discussion

1. Improving resident selection is another subject in improving resident attrition and performance. Academic achievements normally regarded as desirable (AOA status, PhD and MD degrees) have been associated with increased attrition in some studies. However, other factors such as personal and family issues may contribute as well.

2. Residents who are struggling have been found to have consistently worse faculty evaluations and more frequent need for counseling and letters of complaint. Increasing the number of faculty evaluations and paying close attention to problems as they develop are potential interventions.

3. Improved mentoring. Setting clear expectations regarding outcomes but allowing residents to devise strategies to accomplish these goals. Building in short term goals. Providing frequent and frank feedback.

4. Attrition (47)
- General Surgery (1)
- Anesthesiology (3)
- Psychiatry (1)
- Emergency Medicine (1)

### Methods

Using Survey Monkey (Palo Alto, CA), an electronic survey was created to investigate attrition. Involuntary attrition affected 6 residents. Eighteen residents voluntarily left for other medical programs. Four left the practice of medicine. The remaining 19 residents' career paths were not described.

Prior to this report, little information existed regarding attrition within otolaryngology. One study demonstrated an 11% attrition rate from 5-year surgical specialties including urology, otolaryngology, plastic surgery, and general surgery. Another study reported a similar rate for residents in otolaryngology.

A growing body of literature exists regarding attrition in otolaryngology. A study by Longo et al. found an attrition rate of 47% over a 20-year period. Another study by Kwakwa and Jonasson found a similar rate for residents in otolaryngology.

### Conclusion

The findings highlight the importance of understanding resident attrition and identifying strategies to address it. The evolution of general surgery training may allow for improved problem recognition and generate possible solutions.