

otolaryngology



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OTOLARYNGOLOGY

Background

The scope of otolaryngology has expanded during this century from the ear, nose and throat to include most of the head and neck. In fact, the name of the specialty was changed in 1980 from “Otorhinolaryngology” to “Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery,” to reflect the specialty’s evolution.

Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery is a specialty concerned with the medical and surgical treatment of the head and neck. The specialty encompasses cosmetic facial reconstruction, surgery of benign and malignant tumors of the head and neck, management of allergic, sinus, laryngeal, thyroid and esophageal disorders.

With the exception of visual and eye-related disorders (the province of ophthalmologists) and lesions of the brain (treated by neurologists and neurological surgeons), otolaryngologists treat diseases and lesions above the shoulders in patients of all ages — i.e., ears, the respiratory and upper alimentary systems and the head and neck, in general.

Specialists are trained in otology, rhinology, laryngology, allergy, head and neck surgery, facial plastic and reconstructive surgery and bronchoesophagology. They also have an understanding of the communication sciences (i.e., audiology and speech language pathology), endocrinology and neurology.

Profile

Of the 83 participants in the survey, 93 percent are certified by The American Board of Otolaryngology. Ninety-three percent are also certified in surgery.

Eighty-one percent of the respondents said they were attracted to otolaryngology while studying medicine, but they also considered other specialties while in school, such as surgery (87 percent), internal medicine (39 percent), general surgery (35 percent), and plastic surgery (31 percent). Ninety

percent of the respondents are male (10 percent female) with an overall average age of 49.

Most of the respondents said they are quite pleased with their choice of specialty. Ninety-three percent indicated they are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their specialty, while only one percent reported being dissatisfied.

Perspectives

What aspects of otolaryngology are most appealing?

According to the otolaryngologists participating in the survey, the three most positive aspects of their specialty are: the variety of patients they treat (30 percent), the opportunities to combine medicine with surgery (23 percent), and the rewards of utilizing the procedures and technical skills related to the specialty (13 percent).

One respondent said, "The chance to work with people of all ages, especially children is interesting."

What aspects of otolaryngology are least appealing?

Twenty-three percent of the respondents said they are concerned about the HMO/managed care setup. The same amount (23 percent) also are concerned with the decrease in the amount of time they feel they spend with their patients.

One otolaryngologist said, "There is also the problem of dealing with patients who have a preconceived, firmly held and incorrect concept of their problem, or patients who have a very minor problem that needs no treatment."

Eleven percent of the respondents said they don't like the amount of paperwork required. One said, "The paperwork seems to increase year by year."

What would you advise students to consider carefully before selecting otolaryngology?

Most of the respondents find their careers rewarding. They enjoy mixing surgery with medicine, treating a variety of

OTOLARYNGOLOGY

patients and illnesses and maintaining control of their hours. Ten percent indicated that students should consider the time demands of the profession. Another eight percent indicated that students should also consider the long training requirements.

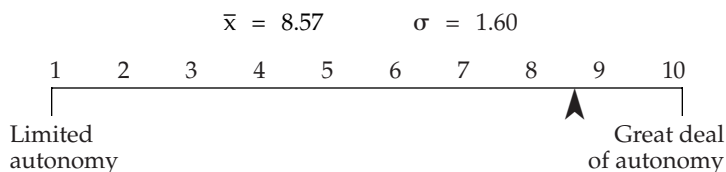
“It is challenging, rewarding and fulfilling,” said one respondent, “You will also learn, of necessity, the business aspects of medicine.”

CRITICAL FACTORS

Autonomy

Eighty percent of the survey participants said they have a high level of autonomy in their specialty, while only two percent experience limited autonomy.

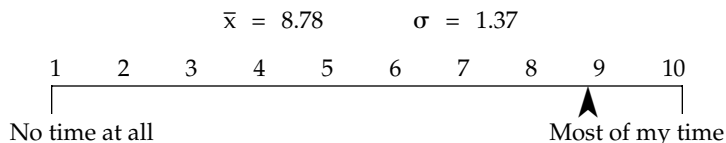
However, the government, insurance companies and managed care organizations are having an effect on this factor. One otolaryngologist said, "Some HMOs attempt to be excessively regulatory and restrictive."



Caring for Patients

On average, these specialists devote most of their time seeing and caring for patients. They diagnose, treat and do follow-up, so the level of involvement is high, although patient turnover tends to be rapid.

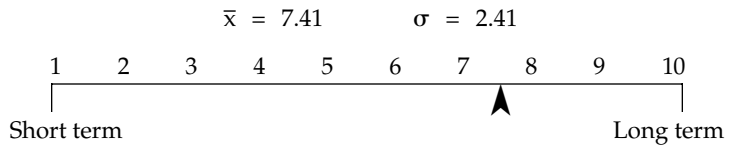
Most of the otolaryngologists surveyed (88 percent) work directly with patients a great deal of the time. One physician commented, "Patient care is the essence of otolaryngology we talk with people and help them."



Continuity of Care

Fifty-four percent of the otolaryngologists surveyed said they provide mostly long-term care to patients, while seven percent said they provide mostly short-term care. But the length of care can vary with this specialty. Problems such as allergies demand a long-term relationship, while surgical procedures, such as a tonsillotomy, involve relatively short-term patient encounters.

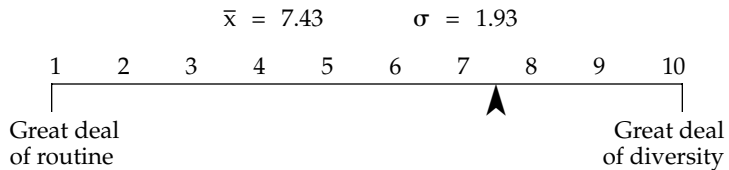
One physician said: “Long-term care relationships form more with the cancer patients than some others.”



Diversity

Seventy-seven percent of the otolaryngologists surveyed said their work provides a great deal of diversity. Six percent said it is mostly routine. While there is variety in surgery, there may be similarities in many of the conditions encountered in the office, such as runny noses and sore throats.

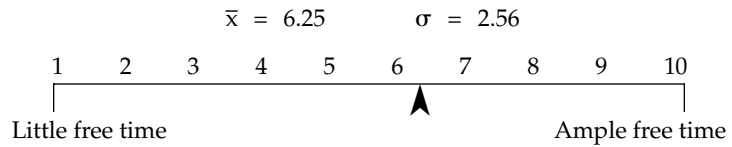
One respondent said, “Otolaryngology provides much diversity: from cosmetic facial reconstruction, surgery of the head and neck, allergies, sinus, and other disorders.”



Family/Leisure Time

According to the survey, otolaryngologists are able to spend a moderate amount of time with family and on leisure activities. Forty percent said they have ample free time, while ten percent said they have little free time.

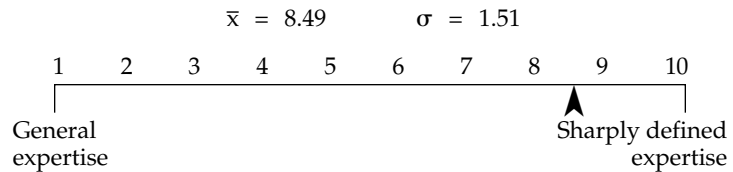
One respondent commented: “The time I spend for myself is somewhat limited because of the nature of my practice. Academics takes a large amount of my ‘free’ time.”



Focus of Expertise

In general, the otolaryngologists participating in this survey feel their specialty has a specific focus. Seventy-nine percent said they have a sharply defined area of expertise, whereas only two percent reported having general expertise in several areas.

As one otolaryngologist said, “The field is expanding technological utilization to benefit patient treatment with less mobility.”

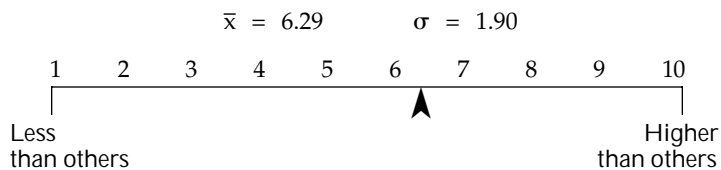


Income

Fifty-five percent of the respondents said their income is higher than other specialists, while 16 percent said it is comparable to others.

One physician commented: "Financially, the specialty has been very good."

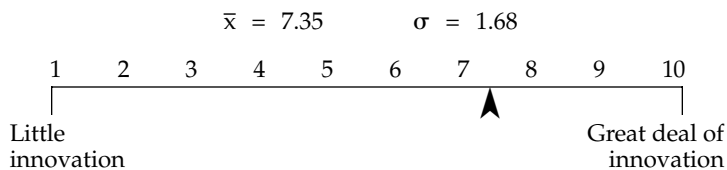
The average pre-tax income for the surveyed otolaryngologists from their 1998 medical practice was \$233,500.



Innovative Thinking

The otolaryngologists surveyed feel their work requires innovative thinking. Forty-seven percent feel their work requires a great deal of innovation, while only six percent feel it requires very little.

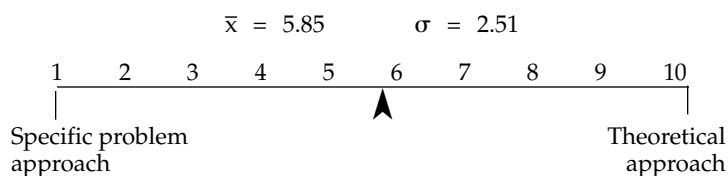
One physician said, "Once you learn your field, innovation is in 99 percent of your solving problems."



Intellectual Content

According to the survey, otolaryngologists are divided between the “specific problem approach” and the “theoretical approach.” Thirty-seven percent said they favor the practical aspect of their work. Forty-nine percent said they favor the theoretical.

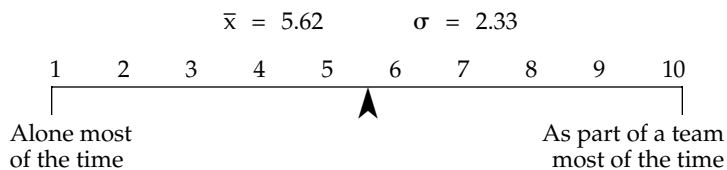
One respondent said, “The approach changes with the patient and the problem, I use a more specific approach for diagnosis versus treatment.”



Interacting with Other Physicians

The respondents were also divided in the amounts of interaction they have with other physicians. Thirty-nine percent said they work as a team most of the time, while 35 percent said they work alone most of the time.

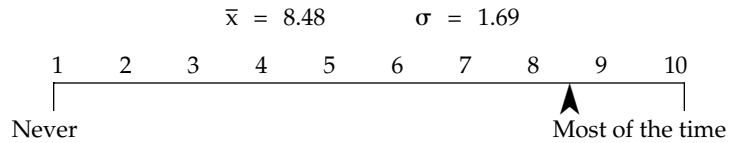
One physician said, “As a solo practitioner, I miss the daily discussions.”



Manual/Mechanical Activities

Otolaryngology is a hands-on specialty, requiring manual dexterity and great precision. With a heavy emphasis on procedures, the work these physicians do requires a lot of mechanical activities. So it is no surprise that 88 percent of the respondents said they perform manual/mechanical activities most of the time.

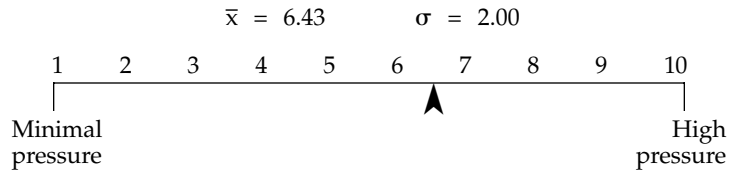
One respondent commented: "From microsurgery to endoscopic procedures, this is a hands-on specialty."



Pressure

This group of otolaryngologists generally described their work as having a moderate amount of pressure. Thirty-one percent of them said they are under great pressure. Twelve percent said they experience minimal pressure.

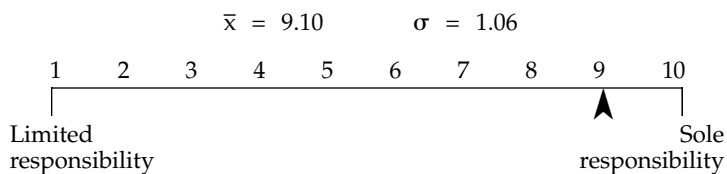
One physician said, "The major pressure is on oneself to help the patient come out healthy and looking forward to the next day."



Responsibility

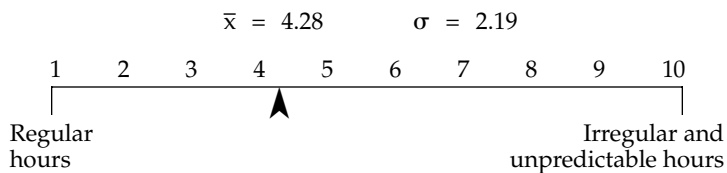
Ninety-one percent of the otolaryngologists participating in the survey said they assume near-total responsibility for their patients. They provide total patient care for those with head and neck problems.

One physician said: "This is a specialty for one person procedures."



Schedule

Fifty-one percent of the respondents said they work regular and predictable hours, while 9 percent said they work irregular and unpredictable hours. According to these physicians, not having an arduous work schedule is one of the more appealing aspects of the specialty.



OTOLARYNGOLOGY

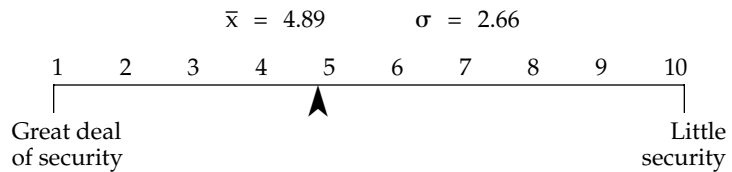
The otolaryngologists surveyed spend their week as follows:

Activity	Average Hours Per Week
Patient care	42
On call	33
Administrative activities	6
Professional travel (i.e., en route to hospital, meetings)	6
Professional activities (i.e., teaching, consulting, research)	4
Continuing education	2
Community service activities	1

Security

Forty-nine percent of the otolaryngologists surveyed said they have a great deal of security in their profession. Twenty percent said they have little security.

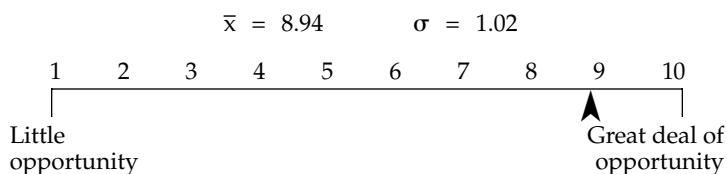
One respondent said, "Security dwindles each year because of managed care pressures."



Sense of Accomplishment

On average, the survey participants strongly believe they achieve a sense of accomplishment in their work. Eighty-nine percent said they have a great opportunity to see concrete end results.

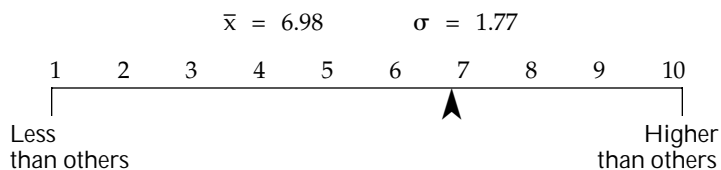
One of the respondents echoes the sentiment of many others: "This specialty provides a lot of satisfaction from seeing good results."



Status Among Colleagues

Thirty-eight percent of the physicians surveyed rated the status of otolaryngology much higher than other specialties. Six percent feel their specialty is comparable to others.

One respondent said, "Otolaryngology is respected. It is higher today than it used to be."



**Patient
Characteristics
and Types of
Illnesses**

The otolaryngologists surveyed treat patients of all ages.

Age Group of Patients	
<u>Average (%)</u>	
Infants	8
Children	23
Adults	44
Elderly	25

They treat slightly more women (55 percent) than men (45 percent). Fifty-five percent of their patients are classified as generally healthy, 22 percent acutely ill, 18 percent chronically ill and 3 percent terminally ill. Sixty-three percent work in a managed care environment and 47 percent are affiliated with a group practice.

The conditions otolaryngologists most commonly treat are:

1. Sinusitis
2. Otitis media
3. Hearing loss
4. Allergic rhinitis
5. Ear infection

Among the conditions they find most challenging to treat are:

1. Head and neck cancer
2. Rhinitis/sinusitis
3. Vertigo / dizziness
4. Ear infection
5. Cancer

**Malpractice
Premiums**

The otolaryngologists surveyed paid an average of \$19,500 for malpractice insurance in 1998. This fee varies according to practice setting.

**Training
Requirements**

The American Medical Association's 1999-2000 Graduate Medical Education Directory lists 104 accredited training programs in otolaryngology. The American Board of Otolaryngology requires at least one year of training in a general surgical program and at least four years of postdoctoral training in otolaryngology for certification. This training must involve increasing responsibility each year and must include a final year of senior experience.

Certification as a pediatric otolaryngologist requires an additional two-year fellowship.

The American Board of Otolaryngology exam consists of two phases: a written qualifying exam and an oral certifying exam.

**Professional
Organizations**

American Board of Otolaryngology
2211 Norfolk
Suite 800
Phone: (713) 528-6200
Fax: (713) 528-1171
www.aboto.org

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The American Board of Otolaryngology, Book let of Information, September 1998.

Mean Scores for Critical Factors

Autonomy	8.57	Manual/Mechanical	
Caring for Patients	8.78	Activities	8.48
Continuity of Care	7.41	Pressure	6.43
Diversity	7.43	Responsibility	9.10
Family/Leisure Time	6.25	Schedule	4.28
Focus of Expertise	8.49	Security	4.89
Income	6.29	Sense of	
Innovative Thinking	7.35	Accomplishment	8.94
Intellectual Content	5.85	Status Among	
Interacting with Other		Colleagues	6.98
Physicians	5.62		

OTOLARYNGOLOGY

Exercise

After you have finished the above career option profile, please complete the following exercise:

- ◆ List your top five Critical Factors below;
- ◆ In Column A, list the rating you gave each of these factors in your Briefing Document;
- ◆ In Column B, list the mean scores for each factor as found in the above profile;
- ◆ Subtract the items in Column B from those in Column A and write the remainder in Column C;
- ◆ Total the numbers in Column C. **NOTE:** Ignore + and – signs.

The closer the number at the bottom is to “0,” the more likely it is that this specialty may be a match for you and requires your further investigation. This total alone, however, means very little until you have compared it with those from each specialty profile.

Critical Factors	A (Your Rating)	B (Mean Scores)	C (Differences)
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
		Total:	_____