



# Special Preface

## Meaningfully Moving Forward Through Intentional Training, Mentorship, and Sponsorship



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*Editor*

The acquisition of effective strategies to successfully navigate both professional and personal realms, as well as the intersections between them, has never been more important. Medicine has always been a rapidly evolving field. However, these changes are amplified by factors like the increased availability of information, managing nontraditional spheres of influence like social media, emerging infectious disease concerns like the COVID-19 pandemic, and understanding how the social determinants of health and our own biases impact not only the care we provide but also the outcomes of our patients and communities.

Dr Cabrera-Muffly, creator, producer, and host of the podcast *OtoMentor*, discusses mentorship and sponsorship, with an emphasis on special considerations for the diverse population we are actively seeking to recruit to otolaryngology in her article, "Mentorship and Sponsorship in a Diverse Population." Mentorship and sponsorship are critical for success in general, but particularly for women and those who are underrepresented in medicine. The balance of the two are also important as "Mentors give you perspective. Sponsors give you opportunities." Said differently, "while a mentor is someone who has knowledge and will share it with you, a sponsor is a person who has power and will use it for you."<sup>1</sup> For example, women are likely to be overmentored but undersponsored.<sup>2</sup> This has long been known in the business world and is also seen in medicine. As noted in the *Harvard Business Review*, regardless of intentions, people tend to gravitate toward those who are like them on salient dimensions such as gender.<sup>3</sup> As such, in fields dominated by individuals with particular demographics, people sharing those characteristics are most likely to be proposed for new positions or opportunities. This can have longitudinal career implications.<sup>1,2</sup>

We cannot mentor and sponsor diverse otolaryngologists if we fail to recruit and effectively train them. Drs O'Brien and colleagues discuss historic and current trends in otolaryngology training, bringing special attention to the lack of diversity in our specialty, implications, and considerations moving forward in their article, "Otolaryngic Training and Diversity." As her team notes, Otolaryngology has one of the lowest percentages of Black physicians of any surgical specialty at 0.8%. Active steps are needed to recruit, retain, and effectively train a more diversified otolaryngology workforce. At a minimum, this includes early outreach, mentoring, and funded opportunities. As Corinne Pittman noted in her remarkable piece, "A Black medical student's plea for diversity, inclusion in otolaryngology residency," and points out that, given the shockingly low percentage of Blacks and women in Otolaryngology, there is a high likelihood that she will be the only Black person in her future residency training program. Ms Pittman also notes that exceptional candidates are often overlooked or unintentionally denied consideration for reasons that have nothing to do with the merit of their applications.<sup>4</sup>

I hope the information and insights presented in these special articles lay a foundation upon which further introspection regarding otolaryngology's past is done and provides a strong evidence base for how to intentionally pursue the goals of equity and justice in our field, its future, and the increasingly diverse communities we serve.

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