Dear Academic Otolaryngology Community:

We recognize the COVID-19 epidemic has created a stressful and chaotic time for everyone in healthcare. Given the high viral load found within the upper respiratory tract, Otolaryngologists particularly are at high risk of contraction. Our Academy has published clear recommendations on exercising precautions with respect to patient care: https://www.entnet.org/content/academy-supports-cms-offers-specific-nasal-policy and https://www.entnet.org/content/new-recommendations-regarding-urgent-and-nonurgent-patient-care

As education leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all our colleagues during this time, including trainees. Many residency programs have already instituted recommendations to decrease resident exposure and risk. This includes minimizing unnecessary exposure to patients as well as social distancing amongst resident team members. Strategies include reduction of resident participation in clinics, limiting resident involvement in single operator surgeries with high-risk patients, and creating team rotations to limit overlap amongst providers. Adequate personal protective equipment should be made available. Although each program must follow their respective institutional GME requirements, it is imperative that we support and advocate for our trainees.

Along with the infectious concerns, some trainees are worried about the loss of educational opportunities critical to their development. As leaders, we must emphasize and model the camaraderie and teamwork vital to our clinical success while empathizing with the educational anxiety of our trainees.

In this time of uncertainty, our role as physicians is clear: we must take care of our patients, take care of ourselves, and take care of each other. Creating a community for discussion is likely to improve our resilience. We invite Otolaryngologists to engage in dialogue on ENT Connect and to share management solutions that simultaneously fulfill our mission of innovation, patient care, and education.

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