

# Professor John Russell: President of CEORL-HNS Dublin 2024

John Russell is professor of paediatric otolaryngology in Dublin and the President of the CEORL-HNS Congress in his hometown. Declan Costello caught up with him to find out what we can expect from the meeting, not just academically, but also in terms of the opportunities for colleagues around the world to meet and to experience the Emerald Isle!



**Prof John Russell,**  
Congress President, CEORL-HNS Dublin 2024;  
Consultant Paediatric Otolaryngologist, Children's  
Health Ireland at Crumlin; Clinical Professor  
University College Dublin; Associate Clinical  
Professor Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

**“This congress has now become the biggest otolaryngology head and neck surgery meeting in Europe, with 3000-4000 delegates”**

## Dublin has a proud history of ENT surgery – tell us a bit about that.

Well, our most famous ENT surgeon would, of course, be Sir William Wilde, who was an eye and ear surgeon back in the 1800s. In fact, he got his medical degree in 1837 from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and he had his own eye and ear hospital called St Mark's Hospital. What was interesting about him was that he was actually appointed as chief oculist for Queen Victoria in Ireland. Then in 1853, he published a book on practical observations of ear surgery and diseases of the ear, and the management of such. But I think everybody will know him as the father of the great Oscar Wilde. So, that was the start. In those days, they were considered eye and ear surgeons. It's quite interesting that we've moved away from the eye and concentrated on the ear and head.

## Yes, as medics we seem to get increasingly specialised and subspecialised and subspecialised! Moving on, can you tell us first of all, what is the CEORL-HNS?

Well, that is a good question. What is this confederation? We call it the confederation for short, because CEORL-HNS is quite a mouthful. Basically, it was a concept that was established in 2009 because, prior to that, there were three main forces in European otolaryngology head and neck surgery. They consisted of: EUFOS, which represented 41 national societies in Europe; the European Academy, which represented all the subspecialties; and the UEMS ORL and Board, which represented standards and sought to harmonise training across Europe. These were three independent forces. Several senior members on the European Academy and EUFOS decided it



John Russell promoting CEORL-HNS Dublin 2024.

would be nice if we had one voice in Europe to represent otolaryngology head and neck surgery and so, they started negotiations between EUFOS, the European Academy and the UEMS. They came to an agreement, and they formed a constitution. Then, in 2015 it was ratified in Prague, and we now have a congress every two years. The last one was in Milan in 2022 and was very successful. This congress has now become the biggest otolaryngology head and neck surgery meeting in Europe, with 3000-4000 delegates. With all the subspecialties, it's a congress for everyone, from trainees to general practitioners, ENTs to the super specialists.

## Is there a theme for the 2024 congress in Dublin?

With such a wide scope, it's very hard to have a unifying theme. So, we prefer to call it an update for otolaryngology head and neck surgery in Europe every two years. I'm very lucky to have as my scientific chair Mr Michael Kuo, who I'm sure you know well.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH

He's in Birmingham Children's Hospital in the UK. He's organised a lot of meetings and he's very proficient. We have a super programme ready, including 16 parallel sessions featuring all the 14 subspecialties. We have a new addition for this year's congress: the newly formed Young Confederation. Every otolaryngologist 45 and under can be part of this organisation, which is a subset of our confederation. They have designed their own programme, their own track for three and a half days, and this track will be ideally placed for the trainees and young consultants.

**That's brilliant! That's been a theme of congresses I've been to over the last three or four years; actually putting the trainees in charge of sessions gives them the value they need from it. Are there any particular things that you're looking forward to? Any headline speakers?**

As president of the congress, I get to invite six keynote speakers and I'm really looking forward to them. Being biased, and a paediatric otolaryngologist myself, I have to have six paediatric keynote speakers, and we have some big names there. For example, we have: Professor Michael Rutter who's very famous in the world of airway; Professor Dana Thompson who has done wonders for the condition called laryngomalacia, which is a common problem in paediatrics; and Ben Hartley who's going to give us some insights into his career as a paediatric head and neck surgeon over the years. So, I'm really looking forward to those keynotes.

I should add that the scientific programme consists of roundtables, keynotes, and instructional courses. We're going to have 128 roundtables, 110 keynotes, and 112 instructional courses. What's even more important for the trainees and the young registrars is we're going to have 46 free paper sessions throughout the two and a half days, so that's an ideal opportunity for them to send in a presentation or a poster.



CEORL-HNS 2024 Congress President John Russell and Scientific Chair Michael Kuo at the Presidential Council Meeting of the CEORL-HNS in Vienna, November 2023.

**What are the main challenges for you as president and in organising a meeting like this?**

The main challenges, as you can imagine, are trying to make sure that we have a balanced programme in each of the subspecialties. The way Michael and I have gone about that is that we have asked for two key people in each of the subspecialties, and then we have nominated two scientific core people in each of the subspecialties. These are the four people that help us with the scientific programme. They've produced the scientific programme with contributions from the subspecialty and national societies and we've already sent out the invitations to all the different subspecialties. Of course, we're going to get people that have to pull out for various reasons. That's the next step – to keep working on filling those key spaces. That is the biggest challenge with a scientific programme with so many parallel sessions.

**Absolutely. Keeping all the plates spinning, as it were. That all sounds fantastic. What about Dublin as a city to visit? What sort of cultural and recreational activities can we look forward to?**

We're very lucky to have the Guinness Storehouse for our congress evening. You may have visited it yourself in the past, but it's our top tourist destination, would you believe? It has 1.1 million visitors every year, and we get to take it over for the evening for

the congress – fantastic! People can learn how to pull a pint of Guinness, and if they want to drink it, they can! They can also learn about the history of how to make it.

**I've been to Trinity College a number of times, but the Guinness Storehouse will be new to me. So that's very exciting!**

Well, if you want culture, then you can visit the Book of Kells, which is a ninth century copy of the gospel. It's very ornate and within Trinity College Library. We've had some famous people go to college there – for example, Jonathan Swift, Dracula author Bram Stoker, Samuel Beckett and Oscar Wilde. So, Trinity is well worth a visit for people who come to Dublin. There's also the Phoenix Park, which is the largest open park in Europe.

Dublin is also an easy place to get from across Europe; there are 190 direct flights from all the cities around Europe into Dublin. It's also easily accessible to the east and west coast of America and Canada. That leads me to the fact that we are actually co-opted now with the American Academy of Otolaryngology (AAO-HNS). The American Academy give us as the Confederation four round tables at their American Academy meeting, and we give them four round tables at the Confederation. I actually went over to Nashville for a paediatric round table at the AAO-HNS meeting at the end of September 2023.

**Super, that sounds like a very productive collaboration. John, it's been brilliant to talk to you, thank you very much indeed. Look forward to seeing you in Dublin. Remind us of the dates again?**

From the 15 to 19 June, 2024. Please come – we look forward to having you there!

Scan the QR code to watch the full interview with Prof John Russell.



A group photo at the CEORL-HNS Presidential Council Meeting in Vienna, November 2023.

## AUTHOR



**Declan Costello, MA, MBBS, FRCS(ORL-HNS),**

Consultant Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon, Wexham Park Hospital, Slough, Berkshire, UK.

[d.costello@nhs.net](mailto:d.costello@nhs.net)  
[@Voicedoctor\\_uk](https://www.instagram.com/Voicedoctor_uk)