

# Trainee Matters

SECTION EDITORS



**Emma Stapleton,**  
Skull Base, Cochlear Implant and  
Complex Otology Fellow,  
Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust,  
Manchester, UK.  
E: [emmastapleton@doctors.org.uk](mailto:emmastapleton@doctors.org.uk)  
[@otolaryngolofox](https://twitter.com/otolaryngolofox)



**Lizanne Steenkamp,**  
Lecturer in Audiology and  
Programme Leader for MSc/PgDip  
in Audiology (pre reg)  
BAA Board Director for  
Accreditation, Speech and  
Hearing Sciences, Queen Margaret  
University, Musselburgh, UK.  
T: +44 (0)131 474 0000  
E: [lsteenkamp@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:lsteenkamp@qmu.ac.uk)

The International Federation of Head and Neck Oncologic Societies (IFHNOS) offers an online fellowship training programme for advanced trainees wishing to subspecialise in head and neck surgery and oncology. **Emma Stapleton** speaks with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the programme, **Dr Jatin Shah** of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Centre.

## A global online fellowship in head and neck surgery and oncology

**Could you tell us a little about yourself?**

I graduated from medical school in India and completed my postgraduate training in general surgery. All my subsequent training and professional career has been at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in New York, where I trained in head and neck surgery, and ultimately became Chairman of the Department of Head and Neck Surgery. In addition to my involvement in various capacities with the American College of Surgeons, American Board of Surgery and the American Head and Neck Society, I established IFHNOS in 1987. Training the next generation of head and neck surgeons has been my mission for the last 40 years.

**You hold a post at a very prestigious institution! Can you talk us through the decisions and training that got you there?**

My training at MSKCC initially was in general surgical oncology, but eventually I subspecialised in head and neck surgery. A critical decision in my career was to

receive training in New York and return back to India. However, opportunities for career growth in USA were far superior to those available at that time in India: thus, I decided to stay in the USA. I was offered a faculty position on the head and neck service, along with a faculty appointment at Cornell University Medical School. The next several years were exciting times of growth in our specialty, with introduction of microsurgery, free flaps, endoscopic laser surgery and multidisciplinary treatments. I actively participated in all of these advances, and was eventually appointed as Chairman of the Department in 1992. We developed a fellowship training programme, which was to be rated the number one training programme in the country - this has been supported by a grant from the National Cancer Institute for over 20 years. To date, we have graduated over 90 surgeons, who have gone on to become leaders in the specialty throughout the USA and many other parts of the world. Our goal now is to offer a programme of training online, such that we can uplift the standards of head and neck surgery amongst next generation of trainees, throughout the world.

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# Locations of GOLF candidates 2014-2017



## What is the IFHNOS online fellowship programme?

This innovative programme was conceived by IFHNOS and is governed by an International Board of Directors. It is offered completely online, and requires pursuing a prescribed course curriculum with online examinations every three months, for seven quarters over a period of two years. The curriculum requires study of several recommended major textbooks, some of which are available free online for registered candidates.

## Who can apply for this programme?

The applicants are required to have the following minimum qualifications:

- Graduation from medical school.
- A minimum of five years of progressive postgraduate clinical training in the specialties of otolaryngology, general surgery or maxillofacial surgery.
- Board certification or its equivalent in your home country.
- Current engagement in clinical care of patients with head and neck cancer.
- Personal statement of commitment for two years in the programme.
- Logbook of surgical procedures

performed in preceding year.

- Letters of support and recommendation from their head of institution.

## What does the syllabus cover?

This two-year programme requires comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of head and neck cancer from etiology, pathology, clinical diagnosis, work up, treatment algorithms for selection of therapy, surgical techniques, postoperative management, role of non-surgical treatment modalities and adjuvant therapies, as well as outcomes. The spectrum of head and neck surgery includes skin cancer, soft tissue tumours, tumours of the oral cavity, pharynx, larynx, salivary glands and thyroid. The curriculum also includes reconstructive surgery, radiation oncology, medical oncology, maxillofacial prosthetics and oncologic dentistry. Aspects of rehabilitation of the patient and new avenues in research are also included in the curriculum. In addition to the recommended textbooks, candidates are advised to review current literature, as well as staging and treatment guidelines. Technical aspects of head and neck surgery can be viewed on videos of surgical procedures performed by world experts on the IFHNOS website.

*83 Fellows certified in 2016!  
Currently 161 Fellows registered*

## 2017 Global Online Fellowship In Head & Neck Surgery and Oncology



**“This is the wave of the future and this is how postgraduate education will be delivered and pursued by future generations of surgeons and trainers.”**

## 36 Approved Observership Sites



### What does the two-year programme involve?

The curriculum is divided into quarterly sections, and is tested by quarterly multiple-choice examinations taken entirely online. The two-year curriculum also requires a mandatory period of mentored clinical observership at one of the 36 recognised centres of excellence spread throughout the globe. The mentors at these institutions are global leaders in head and neck surgery. After successful completion of all seven written examinations and the observership, candidates are required to take an oral examination conducted in several parts of the world by renowned international experts and local / regional examiners. Upon successful completion of the oral examination, the candidates are awarded a certificate jointly issued by IFHNOS and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC).

### How has the programme gone so far?

This exciting programme was launched in 2014 and, to date, has registered nearly 300 candidates, from every corner of the world. The first batch of candidates took their oral examinations in October 2016, and 83 successfully passed. These candidates will

be recognised at the Opening Ceremony of the next world congress of IFHNOS scheduled on 2 September 2018, in Buenos Aires.

### To whom would you recommend this online programme?

This is an exciting opportunity for higher trainees to further mature and hone their judgment, skills and algorithmic thinking process by improving their knowledge base and judgment, without having to displace themselves from their area of work or residence. Clearly, this is the wave of the future and this is how postgraduate education will be delivered and pursued by future generations of surgeons and trainers. Since its inception in 2014, every year there has been progressively increasing interest in this online fellowship, a wonderful opportunity to become a world class head and neck surgeon.

Applications for the 2017 class (which begins on 1 October 2017) will close on 1 September 2017. Online applications are available at [www.IFHNOS.net/online-fellowship](http://www.IFHNOS.net/online-fellowship).



**Jatin P Shah, MD, MS (Surg), PhD(Hon), DSc(Hon), FACS, FRCS(Hon), FDS-RCS(Hon), FRCS(SH), FRACS(Hon),**

Professor of Surgery, EW Strong Chair in Head and Neck Oncology, Head and Neck Service, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New York, NY, USA.

**T: + 1 212 639 7233**  
**E: [shahj@mskcc.org](mailto:shahj@mskcc.org)**