

Preface

Olfaction and Taste



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Guest Editor

It is estimated that over 200 million people in the United States suffer from a chemosensory disorder. The impact of disorders of smell and taste on quality of life is significant. Moreover, these chemosensory losses can leave patients vulnerable to the serious hazards of spoiled foods, smoke, and natural gas. As clinicians, the impact of these losses is often overshadowed by other medical problems. Often, the inability to successfully treat many of these disorders is frustrating for both the patient and clinician. Nevertheless, the number of patients visiting a physician for a chemosensory complaint is estimated to be 200,000 a year.

It is my hope that this issue of the *Otolaryngologic Clinics of North America* will be interesting and helpful to the practicing clinician faced with patients who present with chemosensory loss. Although far from comprehensive, it is designed to highlight areas with the most significant impact on clinical practice. The issue begins by reviewing the basic anatomy and physiology of olfaction and taste and is followed by a guide to the clinical evaluation of the patient presenting with smell and taste disorders. Other articles individually examine the most common causes of chemosensory loss, including chronic sinusitis, postviral loss, head injury, toxic exposures, aging, and the effects of pharmacologic agents. Radiographic evaluation of chemosensory loss is also reviewed. Areas of future research directions are addressed in the final article.

Our understanding of the special senses of olfaction and taste continues to grow. Over the past decade, a fascinating array of basic science

discoveries has furthered our basic understanding of these senses. However, the field remains a rich area for future basic science and clinical research.

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