

Preface



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Guest Editor

Over the past decade, physicians who care for patients with respiratory disorders have noted the strong overlap among inflammatory conditions of the upper and lower airways. Conditions often believed to be distinct, such as asthma, acute and chronic rhinosinusitis, allergic and nonallergic rhinitis, and otitis media, are increasingly being recognized as interrelated diseases of an integrated mucosal system. An appreciation of this pathophysiologic linkage has allowed clinicians to better understand comorbidities that exist in the respiratory tract, leading to improved diagnosis and treatment of upper and lower airway disorders.

This paradigm, often referred to as the unified airway model, is the focus of this issue of the *Otolaryngologic Clinics of North America*. With increasing awareness of systemwide airway comorbidities among otolaryngologists, this issue explores in depth the complex interrelationships that exist among inflammatory respiratory diseases, with emphasis on how these various processes directly affect the practices of otolaryngologists on a daily basis. To review these important concepts and their implications for practice, a group of distinguished faculty representing the broad field of otolaryngology and head and neck surgery has authored 15 articles that highlight various elements of the pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases of the unified airway.

The issue begins with an overview of the unified airway model and its implications for otolaryngology. The focus then turns to relationships among upper airway disorders, such as rhinitis and rhinosinusitis, and their comorbidities with lower respiratory inflammatory processes, such as asthma.

Current approaches to the diagnosis and management of the patient who has allergic rhinitis are reviewed, highlighting new approaches to skin testing and the delivery of immunotherapy. The issue then discusses asthma in detail, including the use of pulmonary function testing and the implementation of recent United States guidelines for its treatment. Finally, chronic inflammatory processes that affect the larynx, which have often been overlooked as a component of the unified airway, are reviewed.

The goal of this issue is to emphasize for the practicing otolaryngologist the importance of considering the airway as an integrated unit and to provide educational and practical resources that allow the otolaryngologist to be more effective in diagnosing and managing patients who have inflammatory respiratory disorders. It is hoped that the reader will find the articles interesting and useful.

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