

Global OHNS Initiative Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027



Executive Summary

The **Global OHNS Initiative Strategic Plan for 2024-2027** outlines a roadmap for the Initiative's role in achieving universal access to high-quality, safe, timely, and affordable care for individuals with health conditions affecting the head and neck. Guided by a commitment to **equity, co-development, and innovation**, this plan is poised to strengthen global otolaryngology-head and neck surgery (OHNS) subspecialty care through research and advocacy efforts.

What is otolaryngology?

Also known as "ENT" or "ORL," otolaryngology involves surgical procedures and treatments for conditions affecting the head and neck, including issues like hearing loss, facial trauma, head and neck cancer, and many others.

Introduction

In otolaryngology, where the effort to improve patient outcomes faces significant public health barriers, the **Global OHNS Initiative Strategic Plan for 2024-2027** is an opportunity for transformation. This plan envisions universal access to quality, affordable, and timely OHNS care through research, collaboration, advocacy, and education.

Over 500,000 people die annually from head and neck cancer, 1.6 billion people live with hearing loss, and an untold number grapple with preventable or treatable otolaryngologic conditions, such as disfiguring facial trauma or life-altering birth anomalies. Despite the opportunity to use data to strengthen otolaryngology care, there remains a limited understanding of who suffers from these conditions and the underlying reasons.

Established in 2019 and incorporated as a 501(3) nonprofit in 2023, the Global OHNS Initiative aims to address the need for global, collaborative public health research to understand and improve otolaryngology care. The initiative has grown to include more than 300 members from around the world. Through dozens of ongoing research projects and thought-provoking discussions led by clinicians and researchers in varying contexts, the Global OHNS Initiative has produced impactful research and partnerships. Key research output includes sets of global priority otolaryngology conditions and procedures, robust estimates of the otolaryngology workforce and deficit of clinicians, and data regarding gender disparities in otolaryngology across international contexts.

Through the Global OHNS Initiative Strategic Plan, we look to refine the organization's aims and expand its reach to achieve the goal of improving global access to otolaryngology care. In this document, we outline the core values that fuel our mission and represent "how" we do our work. Our pillars—Research, Advocacy and Policy, Education, and Capacity Building—form "what" we focus on, the strategic framework that propels us toward our vision. Our SMART goals shall ensure our progress is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

1. Our Vision and Mission

- 1.1. **Vision:** Universal access to high-quality, safe, timely, and affordable care for those with OHNS conditions.
- 1.2. **Mission:** To advance the availability, accessibility, and quality of global OHNS subspecialty care through research, advocacy, and co-development.

2. **Our Values**

- 2.1. **Social Justice & Equity:** Driven by the principles of social justice and equity, our organization is committed to reducing disparities and fostering inclusivity within OHNS care. We firmly believe in equitable access to OHNS care irrespective of background and working actively to remove systemic barriers that hinder this access. Our focus on equity respects the varying levels of resource and time constraints of our collaborators.
- 2.2. **Co-development & Accompaniment:** Our approach draws inspiration from the concept of co-development, which highlights the power of innovation emerging from both well-resourced and resource-constrained environments. This approach emphasizes creative problem-solving and finding solutions using available resources to co-create effective, sustainable, and locally relevant research. Within this framework, accompaniment becomes a guiding principle. It's not just about starting a journey together but rather a sustained partnership. Accompaniment means continuing alongside one another until, together, we determine that the goal has been achieved.
- 2.3. **Innovation & Data-Driven:** Innovation and data-driven decision-making are fundamental to our mission. We continually seek novel approaches to advance OHNS subspecialty care, leveraging cutting-edge research methodologies and technologies. By harnessing the power of data, we ensure that our strategies are effective and efficient, leading to tangible improvements in the availability, accessibility, and quality of care. Our commitment to innovation allows us to respond dynamically to the evolving healthcare landscape and deliver impactful outcomes.

3. **Our Priorities**

3.1. **Research**

At the heart of our organization lies a commitment to leveraging research to improve access to and quality of OHNS care worldwide. We are dedicated to conducting high-quality, high-priority, and high-impact research that addresses pressing gaps in OHNS care within resource-constrained health systems. We aim to illuminate the challenges faced by these systems and contribute critical data and innovative solutions to improve patient outcomes. Collaboration, capacity building, and context-relevant research questions are central to our approach to research.

3.2. **Advocacy and Policy**

We recognize the crucial role that advocacy and policy play in shaping access to OHNS care. We are dedicated to utilizing advocacy as a tool to translate research findings into actionable change, fostering solutions that address the challenges and priorities encountered by OHNS practitioners worldwide. To achieve this, we are committed to supporting our members to advocate effectively, whether to local organizations, national governments, or others. Through

this work, the organization aims to build relationships with policy stakeholders, ministries of health, international otolaryngologic societies, and academic centers to support unified research and patient care goals.

3.3. **Capacity Building**

In pursuit of our mission, education and capacity building are cornerstones of our approach. We are deeply committed to strengthening research capacity in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) through training efforts and co-development. By fostering strategic partnerships with stakeholders and institutions across the globe, we aim to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and skills.

4. **Our Strategies**

4.1. **Research**

- 4.1.1. **Ensure high-quality research output through an established process:** Implement and consistently follow a standardized research process that includes rigorous methodology, peer review, and quality assurance mechanisms to consistently produce impactful research.
- 4.1.2. **Facilitate research involving prospective data collection:** Facilitate studies that engage in prospective data collection, enhancing the depth and breadth of our research endeavors while capturing real-world insights.
- 4.1.3. **Actively apply for external funding to support research:** Pursue and secure external funding sources to bolster the financial foundation of our research initiatives, ensuring sustained progress and expansion.

4.2. **Advocacy and Policy**

- 4.2.1. **Research that informs policy development:** Implement a framework that translates research findings into strategic advocacy initiatives. These initiatives should focus on informing policy development at various levels, from national health plans to hospital-level policies.

4.3. **Capacity Building**

- 4.3.1. **Promote LMIC-driven research and equitable research partnerships:** Prioritize research originating in low- and middle-income countries by fostering equitable research partnerships that share knowledge and resources through South-South and South-North collaborations.
- 4.3.2. **Build a research network:** Extend the initiative's reach by forming a worldwide network of OHNS researchers. This collective effort seeks to foster collaborative research, strengthen research capabilities, and implement global actions based on research outcomes.

4.3.3. **Provide research education:** Strengthen educational initiatives for initiative members, fostering a robust learning environment. Direct research education to cater to the specific needs of research projects and investigators.