

## **BOG Chair-Elect Candidate Statement**

**Cristina Baldassari, MD**

**What is the greatest challenge our specialty is currently facing and how would you advocate for action through member engagement?**

**What specific initiatives would you recommend to strengthen the relationship and engagement opportunities between the AAO-HNS/F and state, local, and specialty societies?**

I am excited about the opportunity to serve as AAO-HNS Board of Governor's (BOG) Chair. One of the most significant challenges facing our specialty is the erosion of physician autonomy. In recent years there have been numerous policies enacted that have had a negative impact on how otolaryngologists practice and provide care for our patients. One such example on a national level was the passage of the No Surprises Act, which has allowed for the possibility of rate-setting by health insurers who will have the power to unilaterally dictate reimbursement rates to providers. Similar trends have been noted locally with non-evidence-based institutional policies that have made it difficult to mix allergy shots and have required sterilization and packaging of tongue blades and wax cures for office-based use. It is essential that otolaryngologists are educated about potential threats to our practices and are then ENGAGED to affect change. I see the BOG taking a lead role in upcoming years in increasing engagement among all otolaryngologists, including colleagues from different practice types, geographic areas, and diverse backgrounds. It is essential that the BOG develop practical, streamlined resources that can be utilized by otolaryngologists to advocate on behalf of our practices and patients. Examples of potential podcasts and webinars include, "Affecting Change at Your Hospital" and "Local Politics Matter: How You Can Get Involved." To highlight the importance of this area, consideration could be given to developing an "Advocacy and Engagement" track at either the AAO-HNSF Annual Meeting & OTO Experience or the AAO-HNS/F Leadership Forum & BOG Spring Meeting. In order to ensure that physician independence is maintained, we must empower our members to assume leadership roles in our hospitals and increase participation in local, state, and national politics.

In past years, I have had the great pleasure of serving as the BOG Secretary, the BOG Representative for my state society, and as a member of the BOG Governance and Society Engagement Committee. These roles have allowed me to gain insight on how the BOG can serve as liaison between our smaller local societies and the AAO-HNS/F. In recent regional calls among our BOG societies, it was readily apparent that there are some states and organizations that have thriving, effective societies and others whose societies were struggling to engage members and remain viable. To help address this, consideration should be given to developing a "Buddy" or "Partner" society program. Such a program could pair two participating BOG societies together for one year. In addition to sharing best practices and education content, there is the potential for resource sharing such as jointly supporting a lobbyist or administrator.