IHF honors founder Dr. Michael Paparella

During a nearly 50-year career treating people with ear, nose and throat issues, Michael Paparella, M.D., has received plenty of notes from grateful patients. He always enjoys getting them. But he recently received a letter from a patient that really stood out. Paparella had treated the man back in the 1970s, and he was now expressing his gratitude.

The former patient thanked Dr. Paparella for the gift of hearing and closed with a saying from business leader Ronnie Max Oldham: “Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise, risking more than others think is safe, dreaming more than others think is practical, and expecting more than others think is possible.”

Dr. Paparella was touched, not only to hear from a patient whom he treated more than 40 years ago, but that this quote summed up his philosophy as a physician. “We get a lot of letters from grateful patients, but not from the distant past and not with a quote that represents my life,” he said. “I had never heard this quote, but I found that to be so neat.”

Dr. Paparella served as professor and chair of the University of Minnesota’s Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery from 1967 to 1984. Then he opened the Paparella Ear, Head and Neck Institute in Minneapolis. A much-lauded physician, Dr. Paparella has been named to Castle Connolly’s America’s Top Doctors for 20-plus years. He has authored or edited 665 scientific publications and 65 books and helped train 360 otolaryngologists, including many who are professors and department chairpersons around the world.

Dr. Paparella often travels internationally to teach and speak about otological diseases including his method of treating Meniere’s disease — a condition of the inner ear that causes vertigo, hearing loss and ringing in the ear plus other ear diseases. He developed a more conservative treatment called an endolymphatic sac enhancement. The ear surgery relieves Meniere’s symptoms by prompting the sac to absorb more endolympathic fluid. He has done it successfully several thousand times.

Most physicians believe Meniere’s disease is “idiopathic,” which means the cause is unknown. Based on a study of 500 patients with Meniere’s disease plus routine observations of anatomical anomalies in patients during surgery, Dr. Paparella presented a groundbreaking paper at the Collegium in Basel, Switzerland some 30 years ago. He described the pathogenesis and the causes of the symptoms. The paper and publication that followed was titled, “The Cause (Multifactorial Inheritance) and Pathogenesis (Malabsorption of Endolymph) of Meniere’s Disease and its Symptoms (Mechanical and Chemical).” At that time, there were no publications on the genetic causes of Meniere’s disease.

Since that time, almost a hundred articles in genetic journals and basic science journals have described chromosomal abnormalities in Meniere’s disease patients. The causative gene has not yet been identified.

Recently, Dr. Paparella traveled to Brazil and Italy to teach others. In Brazil, he was an honored guest and spoke at the World Congress. The president of the Congress trained as a fellow with Dr. Paparella at the U of M. Dr. Paparella also was the keynote speaker and guest of honor at the International Symposium on Meniere’s Disease and Inner Ear Disorders in Rome, which is held every five years. There, he was fortunate to be guest of honor at two of the last three meetings. Dr. Paparella lectured at the opening ceremony in Rome on “Cause, Pathogenesis and Symptoms of Meniere’s Disease.” The genetic cause originally described by Paparella has and is being proven scientifically. He also had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis, thanks to another former student, who is the hearing specialist for the Pope and cardinals at the Vatican. The Pope holds a Papal audience every Wednesday, often with 40,000 people in attendance. To his surprise, Dr. Paparella was invited onto the stage with the Pope and 80 cardinals. “Pope Francis came around and chatted with me, and I shook his hand. He was very kind, smiling, a modest guy,” recalls Dr. Paparella.

A few years prior, Dr. Paparella and his wife, Treva, were invited to India and had the privilege of a personal 45-minute meeting with Mother Teresa six months before she passed away. Mother Theresa will be honored as a Saint this year.

Making lasting connections with patients, other physicians, and even the Pope and Saint Mother Theressa have all been rare and wonderful experiences in Dr. Paparella’s career.

Dr. Malick Diop (left) works with his students at his clinic in Senegal, Ethiopia, on the cholesteatoma surgery project, made possible by the International Hearing Foundation and the Starkey Hearing Foundation. This region of Ethiopia only has two ENT doctors to care for the needs of 7.5 million people. Dr. Diop studied with Dr. Michael Paparella at the University of Minnesota in 1989 and was an IHF fellow.

Ethiopian Cholesteatoma Surgery Project
We Get Letters...

Dear Mrs. Paparella and IHF:
I would like to thank IHF and its Board of Directors for helping my 3-year-old daughter receive hearing aids. Without your help she would not have been able to advance her speech and hearing. We’re so grateful for this donation.

Sincerely, K. Jones

Dear IHF Board of Directors:
Thank you … thank you … we appreciate all that IHF did to help my son receive his hearing aid. Johnny was falling behind in school, but since receiving his hearing aid, he’s doing so much better.

Thank you again. Jack & Lori

Dear Friends:
We want to thank IHF and Dr. Paparella for everything you’ve done to help our son with his hearing loss. We were so upset when we found out that he was not hearing like he should. After tests were completed and aids fitted, our son would comment on hearing things he’d been missing, like birds singing and thunder. It was amazing watching the expression on his face when hearing new sounds around him.

Many thanks, Lonny

We need to continue communicating the message of IHF’s mission. This organization does incredible, impactful work that benefits people everywhere. It is our job as members to continue to inspire others and explain the impact and importance of IHF. Through its “Research, Service and Education” mission, IHF is “fighting ear diseases one person at a time.”

As you are aware, IHF funds one of only three temporal bone labs in the world, one of the two largest where the pathology of the human ear can be studied extensively. Otopathology research in the laboratory regularly results in the discovery of new diseases and learning more about existing diseases. The research has been critical in understanding ear diseases including ear infections, Meniere’s disease and others. This research has improved the lives of many Americans and beyond.

I sincerely thank you for listening.

—President Brad Birnberg

MISSION STATEMENT
The International Hearing Foundation — nonprofit, tax-exempt, and funded solely through donations and fundraising events — has a three-fold mission: otological research, service and education — all areas of great need. Beneficiaries of these charitable endeavors are first local but also international. The IHF, an affiliate of the University of Minnesota Foundation, is the only hearing-related association in the world that has an international focus.

Board of Directors: Brad Birnberg, President; Richard Kleber, CFM, Vice-President; Michael M. Paparella, M.D., Secretary and Treasurer; Treva Paparella, Executive Director. Board: Tani and William F. Austin, William Avery, D.D., Sebahatin Cureoglu, M.D., Oleg Froymovich, M.D., Frank Grovenstein, James D. Hainlen, Ph.D., Jantze Haley, Steve Juhn, M.D., Anita Long, David Lieberman, CIMA, Robert Margolis, Ph.D., Mark Paparella, Matthew Patterson, M.D., Elizabeth Payne, M.D., Patricia Porter, Brandon Sewaltch, Joseph P. White, CPA, Bevan Toch, M.D. IHF Event Coordinator: Tim Miller. Medical/Research Advisory Board: David J. Lim, M.D., House Ear Institute; Josep M. Miller, Ph.D., Kresge Hearing Institute, Hamed Sajjadi, M.D., San Jose Ear and Sinus Center.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S DESK
As we enter into the 31st year of IHF and I look back over the past years, I’m reminded of how far we’ve come and yet how much there is to do.

Thinking back to Helen Keller’s comment regarding her deafness as well as being blind, she felt being in the world of silence was much worse than being blind. Think about that, and then how would you answer this? I’m not sure how I would answer this question, but what I do know, is that before we can develop speech, a precious human function, we must be able to hear. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to cure deafness and other ear diseases?

Through research grants from the Starkey Hearing Foundation as well as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), we are able to continue the much-needed research surrounding ear diseases. Maybe someday we will find a cure for deafness!

The Marlys Soderberg Meniere’s and Tinnitus support groups continue to help those who suffer with either of these debilitating diseases. We honor and recognize the strong leadership of Rosie Hulse-Larson, long-time group leader.

Our international missions continue in Senegal, Africa as well as in other third world countries. Dr. Robert Margolis has been instrumental in bringing Rotary and IHF together to help support “Hearing for Humanity,” which provides grants for audiological services in places such as Malawi, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Because of you, our donors, we are able to continue the mission work of IHF – RESEARCH, SERVICE AND EDUCATION.

Thank you for your caring spirit that leads you to make life-changing contributions in support of the International Hearing Foundation.

—Treva Paparella
A Long Journey from the Middle East to the Midwest

By Mohammad Seyyedi, M.D.

My journey started six years ago, in early 2010, when I was practicing as an academic general otolaryngologist in Iran. After graduating from Tehran Medical School, I worked as a physician and surgeon assistant at a general hospital. My interest in otolaryngology developed during that time. I was scrubbing in with surgeons from a variety of specialties, and this experience cemented my desire to pursue otolaryngology. I completed my otolaryngology residency in one of the most competitive programs at Mashhad Medical University in Iran. I obtained my board certificate and began my career at a trauma hospital in Iran.

With a successful career in otolaryngology, I was feeling happy with my training and the increasing number of my patients. But my eagerness for self-improvement and passion for research led me to relocate to the United States for the opportunity to do research at Harvard Medical School under the mentorship of Dr. Joseph B. Nadol Jr., chairperson of its Otolaryngology Department. I became very interested in otopathology and conducted several NIH-funded research projects. For one project, I went to Minneapolis to study temporal bones at the Otopathology Lab of the University of Minnesota, directed by Dr. Michael Paparella.

I knew Dr. Paparella previously through his scientific achievements. He had trained many otolaryngologists all over the world by sharing his energy and enthusiasm, his scientific rigor and his visionary insights into otology and otopathology. His legacy to otopathology is more than just his own discoveries; it is in the exploration and discoveries that he has inspired in future generations. My Minneapolis research project gave me the opportunity to meet him and attended his operations. I really was impressed by his character, humility and excellent surgical techniques. This experience really changed my life and encouraged me to pursue a clinical neurotology fellowship under his mentorship.

This did not happen until four years after I first met him. I applied for his prestigious fellowship in 2014 and fortunately, I was accepted. I completed a one-year neurotology fellowship under his leadership, and at the same time I was conducting research at the Otopathology Lab. I learned his unique and excellent techniques in ear surgery, specifically the endolymphatic sac enhancement surgery that helps patients suffering from disabling Meniere’s disease with their impaired hearing and debilitating vertigo. I can honestly say that this part of my training has been the best part of my curriculum vitae and I always feel proud of that. When I look back, all my accomplishments were worth all the challenges of the immigration experience and being 6,570 miles away from my home and my family. I am very grateful for this experience and love to share it with others who may be considering similar endeavors.

Marlys Soderberg Meniere’s & Tinnitus Support Groups Meet Monthly

- Support groups are held the first Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon.
- Group meetings, free of charge, are held at the Masonic Children’s Hospital (formerly St. Mary’s Fairview Hospital).
- For more information, contact the IHF office at 612-339-2120. Pictured, from left, are Treva Paparella, executive director of IHF and Rosie Hulse-Larson, long-time support group leader.

Thanks to the Starkey Hearing Foundation for its continued support of IHF. Pictured, Bill & Tani Austin with Dr. & Mrs. Paparella.
Past IHF Fellow presents research at COSM

Dr. Pelin Kocdor is a past IHF clinical and research fellow with the International Hearing Foundation. Her research presentation, “Changes in Cochlear Lateral Wall and Bony Layer of Vestibular Aqueduct in Meniere’s Disease and Endolymphatic Hydrops without Vestibular Symptoms: A Temporal Bone Study” took second place the Combined Otolaryngology Spring Meetings in Boston. She is a neurotology fellow at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Department of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery.

Paparella Clinical Otological Award presented to Abe Gol

International Hearing Foundation President Brad Birnberg presented Abe Gol (right) with the Paparella Clinical Otological Award for his research paper, “Bone Conduction Noise Exposure via Ventilators in NICU.” The award was established in 1999 by Dr. and Mrs. Michael Paparella through the IHF, in recognition of a resident’s outstanding clinical research in the field of otology.

IHF & Rotary help start San Felipe, Mexico telehealth hearing project

In December, the IHF board gave $5,000 for the San Felipe Hearing Project, a partnership with the Minneapolis-University Rotary Club and the Rotary Club of San Felipe, Baja California, Mexico. The contribution is matched by the Rotary district and the Rotary International Foundation. The project will develop services to underserved communities using telehealth technologies. During an October 2015 visit, IHF board member Bob Margolis met with San Felipe Rotarians and four physicians offering resources. IHF Board member Bevan Yueh, head of the U of M Department of Otolaryngology, will help identify otolaryngologists who are interested in volunteering.

This program is the first of its kind. Two clinics will start telehealth hearing services with U.S. audiologists and physicians. Centro de Salud is a community clinic that serves primarily poor people who qualify for government healthcare programs. The Baja Medical Clinic serves an area populated by U.S. and Canadian residents, who will receive hearing services for less than U.S. rates, but sufficient to support both clinics. A start-up grant application for $150,000 will be submitted to the Rotary Foundation to support equipment, training of onsite staff and a year supply of hearing aids. The goal is for the telehealth clinics to be self-sufficient by year two.

Eivind Hoff Award goes to Tyler Mingo

University of Minnesota medical student Tyler Mingo received the Eivind Hoff Award for his research, “Velocardiofacial Syndrome and Hearing Loss.” The International Hearing Foundation through the Minnesota Medical Foundation, now the University of Minnesota Foundation, established this award to recognize medical students for their superior research and writing in the area of clinical or basic otology.

First presented in 1995, the award honors the memory of Eivind O. Hoff, the first executive director of the Minnesota Medical Foundation. At the time of his death, Hoff was associated with the IHF. Accompanied by IHF President Brad Birnberg (at podium) and Dr. Robert Marsel, Eivind’s wife Kathy (foreground) presented the award to Tyler Mingo (right).

Paparella Grand Rounds Lecture held in May

William Meyerhoff, M.D., Ph.D., was the 2016 recipient of the Grand Rounds Lecture honoring Michael Paparella, M.D., and sponsored by the International Hearing Foundation. Dr. Meyerhoff’s lecture, “I … The Under Emphasized,” was held May 2 at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Meyerhoff is Professor Emeritus, Department of Otolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

U of M Otopathology Lab 2015-16

After a day working on research projects, the Otopathology Lab staff enjoys dinner with Dr. Michael Paparella, third from right, and Dr. Steven Juhn, IHF board member, fourth from right.
Meet new IHF Board Member Anita Lang

Anita L. Lang, M.A., FACMPE, currently serves as administrator for the Paparella Ear Head & Neck Institute (PEHNI) and The Hearing Institute. She is honored to be a new member of the IHF Board of Directors in supporting its international mission of otology research, service and education.

With 35 years’ experience in organizational development, board governance, system integrations, education and consulting, Anita has served in progressive and diverse leadership roles including family practice and specialty care, primarily in otolaryngology, neurosurgery and orthopedic-spine. Other organizational experience includes Ridgeview Medical Center, Park Nicollet Medical Center, Fairview-University Medical Center and United HealthCare. Her diverse experiences have provided a wellspring of leadership excellence plus creative insights and perspectives into best practices, compliance and commitment to patient care and quality outcomes.

Anita earned a Master’s of Arts degree in health and human services from Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota and a Bachelor of Science degree from Saint Cloud State University. Achievements include Fellowship in the American College of Medical Practice Executives (FACMPE) and Certified Medical Practice Executive (CMPE). Anita has served on the Board of Directors for the Minnesota Medical Management Group Association as chairperson of its Communications and ACMPE committees and is a member of its Government Affairs Committee. She has also served on the national MGMA Professional Papers Committee. Anita also has also served as adjunct instructor at Saint Mary’s University of Minnesota.

She is co-author of a forthcoming e-book that will engage readers to consider multi-sector industry approaches to health and well-being. Anita and her husband, Rich, live in Chanhassen. They have three adult children and four grandchildren. Outside of her professional endeavors, she enjoys time with family and friends, reading, singing, yoga and ballet class.

Meet IHF Fellow Grace Park

My interest in medicine started at an early age, and my passion grew and motivated me to seek a career in medicine. My childhood home was in Philadelphia, but my love for Minnesota grew when I attended Woodbury (Minn.) Senior High School. Both Pennsylvania State University and the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities have strong research programs and a great campus life. Ultimately, I chose the U of M because I felt like I could develop a diverse science background; plus I love the Minnesota winter!

While attending U of M, my life as a pre-med student was stressful but rewarding. Like a typical student, I was not sure about my major in college at first. After taking introductory classes in both neuroscience and microbiology, I then knew I wanted to major in microbiology. The ability to combine different disciplines of science into one major was what attracted me to this field. My fondness for microbiology transitioned into my attraction toward otolaryngology and the temporal bone lab housed in the Lions Research Building.

My career started in 2013 while I was a volunteer working under Dr. Nicole Geeyoun Kwon. While volunteering, she introduced me to the wonderful faculty and staff in the Otopathology Lab. Since then, I have had the incredible opportunity to work on several projects involving biofilm disruption using nanoparticles, immunohistochemistry on animal tissue samples, and temporal bone processing.

As a lab technician, my work primarily deals with procuring, processing, sectioning and staining of human temporal bones as well as administrative work. Working with this accomplished team made me realize a career in otopathology could be rewarding. From the time Dr. Michael Paparella founded the lab until now, the vision for the lab and the direction of the research has not once faltered and it continues to positively benefit the community. I am very proud and lucky to have joined the laboratory and that I am able to work with such established doctors and researchers from Minnesota and around the world.

Meet IHF Fellow Serdar Kaya, IHF Fellow

I graduated from Istanbul University Cerrahpasa Medical School in Turkey and completed my residency in otolaryngology-head and neck surgery at the Inonu University, Malatya, also in Turkey. I have worked in a state hospital for three years.

I have been at the University of Minnesota Otopathology Lab as a research fellow since October 2014. My studies are on the effects of labyrinthitis on the cochlea, and the vestibular system of Mondini dysplasia. This was my first time working on human temporal bones.

Aside research opportunities in the lab, I have been able to observe Dr. Michael Paparella’s surgeries and participate in meetings held by the department, which was a really nice experience for me. I strongly believe that everything I have experienced in Minnesota will be valuable in my future.

I am so glad to be in one of the world’s most wonderful labs. I am so honored to have met Dr. Michael and Mrs. Treva Paparella. I would like to thank Dr. Paparella, Treva, Dr. Sebahattin Curoglu, and all the lab staff for their support and help during my stay here.

You must be the change you wish to see in the world.  
- Ghandi
LISTENS for those who can’t hear

We need your help to implement International Hearing Foundation (IHF) programs. Please make your check payable to the International Hearing Foundation and mail to 701 25th Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55454.

Here is my contribution in support of better hearing.

- $15.00
- $25.00
- $50.00
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- $250.00
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The IHF is an affiliate of the University of Minnesota Foundation, a 501(c)3 charitable organization. For more information about the IHF, please call (612) 339-2120 or visit www.ihf-mmf.org.

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