



## COMMUNITY SERVICE

# Commitment to ENT Health, in Chicago and Around the World

Rush University Medical Center announces the creation of the Center for Underserved at Rush ENT (CURE), an initiative aimed at providing greater access to otolaryngology care for rural counties in Central Illinois. Rush's ENT specialists have delivered services in these communities for patients with complex needs who have been referred to Rush University Medical Center for surgical services and who would otherwise not have them available. The areas of referral include head and neck surgery, rhinology, otology, facial plastics and laryngology.

"Our objective has been to develop an urban-rural health program through which we can provide the complete spectrum of care to a person living in rural Illinois, just the same as an individual living in the city of Chicago who has access to five major medical centers," said Ashok A. Jagasia, MD, PhD, director of Rush Oak Park Otolaryngology and the director of ENT Global Health, who additionally leads all current Rush ENT programs for underserved communities.

The next goal of the CURE initiative includes access to a mid-level provider to help with telemedicine visits and facilitate the referral process while expanding complex otolaryngology care to patients in central Illinois.

### **Rush Expands Otolaryngology Integrated Telemedicine Program for Homeless**

Dr. Jagasia and partnering providers have expanded their otolaryngology program for the homeless community that began four years ago at Franciscan Outreach, a Chicago-based homeless shelter. This year, they have developed a virtual care platform that extends their services to other homeless shelters across Chicago.

"We believe that extension of care to the homeless community will help reduce visits to the emergency room and also provide services that a homeless individual may not otherwise seek," Jagasia said.

The integrated telemedicine project includes a combination of both video and in-person appointments, all of which are conducted using the Epic platform. This is the first model, Jagasia said, to provide otolaryngology care for the homeless community that integrates telemedicine and in-person visits.

Rush's ENT providers have also collaborated with Rush's audiologists to provide hearing screenings onsite at the Franciscan Outreach homeless shelter. The next phase of the integrated telemedicine project will be to use this collaboration with Rush audiologists to provide services through a free clinic to be held on the third floor of Rush University Medical Center's professional building.

The integrated telemedicine project will also offer otolaryngology care to the homeless communities on Chicago's west side. The team behind this project includes West Side shelter sites and their supervisors; Sharon Gates, senior director, Student Diversity and Community Engagement, Rush University; Kate Dunckley, PhD, CCC-A, an audiologist at Rush University Medical Center; Rush medical students; and collaborating primary care providers.

### **Rush ENT Specialists Offer Hearing Program in the Dominican Republic**

In the Dominican Republic, there are just six audiologists serving the country's 10 million people, according to Dr. Jagasia, MD. Among those are members of a team led by Dr. Jagasia that began a hearing program in Peralta in the Dominican Republic three years ago.

Previously, Rush medical practitioners had been offering surgical services in a Peralta hospital for seven years.

The ENT specialists are, for the first time at the Peralta hospital, offering ENT services for free to all newborns. Their efforts have allowed for the availability of hearing screenings for all children within the communities served by the hospital.

The team's objectives include expanding hearing services to other hospitals in the western region of the country and, ultimately, providing access to hearing screenings to all children in the Dominican Republic.