

# WORLD VOICE DAY



**Norman D. Hogikyan, MD**  
**Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery**  
**University of Michigan**

I became involved with planning the first World Voice Day as a member of the AAO-HNS Speech, Voice and Swallowing Disorders Committee. In 1999, the Brazilian Society of Laryngology and Voice started a National Day of Voice on April 16. They organized a variety of activities to raise awareness among the public about voice problems and voice care. Based upon their success and a shared commitment to voice-related issues, the European Laryngological Society (ELS) and the AAO-HNS proposed in 2002 to join with our Brazilian colleagues and celebrate a World Voice Day on April 16, 2003.

Working together with my colleague and AAO-HNS fellow Clark A. Rosen, MD, and ELS leader Professor Mario Andrea from Lisbon, Portugal, we began plans for the first World Voice Day. We reviewed the Brazilian events from the spring of 2002, and held a planning session at the 2002 fall meeting in San Diego, CA.

Given the international nature of this event, we focused efforts upon building resources on the AAO-HNS website. We wrote fact sheets on common voice-related concerns, and created press release materials that could be used by Fellows in their own communities. We wanted resources that could be used by both the general public and otolaryngologists. These materials were subsequently translated into other languages for use abroad. An article in the Bulletin helped to publicize the event and encourage local participation by our members.

The first World Voice Day on April 16, 2003, saw a variety of events worldwide, and much activity on the web. We had hoped for national media coverage, but the invasion of Iraq a month earlier dominated the airwaves. The University

of Michigan Health System sent out a press release and I did several radio interviews that day, in addition to local events and promoting our web resources.

Since that time, World Voice Day has grown to a truly worldwide event celebrated each year on April 16 by a tremendously diverse group, including the Malaysian Society of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery, Zimbabwe Otolaryngology Society, Mexican Voice Foundation, and Irish Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery Society. Michael M. Johns, MD, has become another key member of our AAO-HNS team, and each year we have augmented the materials on our website as well as holding local events. The yearly U.S. themes have included "Listen to your voice, it might be telling you something," "Put your best voice forward," and "Don't tax your voice." This year's theme is a very timely, "Invest in your voice."

In the Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Michigan, we have held free community head and neck cancer screening clinics in conjunction with World Voice Day. Last year I gave talks about vocal physiology and vocal health to local middle school choirs, then enjoyed the show as they sang internationally themed songs. This year we plan to celebrate the human voice in conjunction with our School of Music, Theater and Dance, and will again have a community cancer screening clinic on the following Saturday. A World Voice Day concert in Lisbon, Portugal, has been organized by Professor Andrea, featuring the famous Fado genre of Portuguese song. This will be televised throughout Europe, and to the world via satellite and the internet.

As a laryngologist, my clinical and academic interests revolve around the voice, while as a human being I appreciate the importance of the spoken word and am often moved by the beauty of the singing voice. Through the AAO-HNS

I have had the privilege of participating in the international celebration of World Voice Day from the very beginning. This day is an opportunity not only to educate the public about the signs and symptoms of voice disorders and the importance of a healthy voice, but also a way for Academy members to become involved in promoting the field of otolaryngology-head and neck surgery and educating people about what we do.