

A TEAM APPROACH TO DIAGNOSING AND TREATING VOICE PROBLEMS

When traditional testing fails to determine the cause of chronic hoarseness or laryngitis, try the most advanced test available: video stroboscopy.

As a caregiver, Terry Tidd has met her share of challenges with her mother, Clara. "My mom's had frequent bouts of laryngitis for as long as I can remember," explains Terry, "and she's also had a persistent cough for a couple of years."

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Ear, Nose & Throat

DEVANG M. SHAH, MD
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Terry Tidd and Clara Nemeth

HIGH PHOTO BY AMANDA SMITH

Over time, the problem affected more than just Clara's speech; it changed her behavior as well. "She was beginning to get very reclusive," says Terry. "She would not want to talk because her voice was so weak and this isolated her from her friends."

Terry brought Clara to Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat for a consultation. "Although Clara is an elderly individual with Alzheimer's disease, she was still considered to be a great candidate for our team approach in treating her communication problem," notes Devang M. Shah, MD.

Video stroboscopy and the speech therapy team

"To evaluate a patient's voice, ENT doctors perform a standard office procedure called fiberoptic laryngoscopy, which allows us to see the larynx, or voice box," explains Dr. Shah. "However, if this procedure shows nothing wrong, as in Clara's case, we have an additional test called video stroboscopy, which lets us obtain

a high-resolution freeze-frame video of what is happening in the larynx, similar to the super-slow-motion replays we see on TV for sporting events."

"Video stroboscopy truly is the gold standard in diagnosing voice disorders," supports Kelly Yurasko, MSLP, CCC-SLP. "It helps us identify anything from nodules on the vocal cords to polyps, cysts, and cancers, as well as abnormalities in the vibrations of the vocal cords. This information helps us create the most appropriate treatment plan. While some patients may require surgery, many can be helped with speech therapy alone."

"In Clara's case, after battling years of hoarseness, she had gotten into the habit of whispering and using inappropriate muscles to speak," recalls Kelly. "She couldn't figure out how to fix this problem on her own, which resulted in an inability to communicate effectively and social isolation. We were thrilled to offer Clara the services of our speech department at Atlantic Ear, Nose and Throat to

help restore her voice.

"We tailor treatment to everyone's needs, taking into account a person's age and ability," emphasizes Kelly. "We were able to give Clara different sounds that facilitated proper vibration of the vocal cords, and she did very well with that. Her voice is so much better, and her daughter said she's definitely more social now."

"Humans are social by nature," agrees Dr. Shah, "and when we lose our ability to communicate and interact with others, we become isolated and reserved. Once Clara's voice was restored, she returned to all the activities she normally did, so it's made a huge difference for her."

Astounding outcome

Terry is thrilled with her mother's results, and says she was surprised by the effectiveness of the customized speech therapy program.

"Who knew that something as simple as these little exercises could make such a difference?" she marvels. "The results were

astounding. It amazed me."

She confirms that her mother is back in action again with her friends. "Mom is running all over the place, talking to everybody," says Terry with a chuckle. "She's able to keep her voice strong, and she doesn't cough anymore, either. It's great!"

Terry is glad she consulted Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat. "Dr. Shah told me, *We can fix this with no surgery or medications, which was not what I expected,*" she adds, "and he and Kelly both made the entire experience very enjoyable for my mother and me. They were absolutely fantastic." *—Michael J. Sobus*

For Audiological & ENT expertise

The skilled physicians at Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat welcome your call. They are located in Lake Mary, DeLand, and Orange City. Call (407) 444-5225 or (386) 774-9880 for an initial consultation at any location.

Visit Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat on the Web at www.myENTdoctor.com.

Mother Returns to Trusted Surgeon

When chronic sinusitis threatens her son's well-being, one mother seeks out the ear, nose and throat doctor who helped him years earlier. He offers a safe, minimally invasive solution.

Barbara Costa's son was plagued by recurring sinus infections.

"Tyler was suffering with congestion for about a year," she explains. "We thought it was allergies."

Like any conscientious parent, Barbara tried to find the answer, and took her son to an allergist. However, it turned out Tyler wasn't allergic to anything.

Still, the sinus problem worsened.

"In May 2009, it started to peak — Tyler had really black eyes and trouble sleeping," reports Barbara. "Then he started developing bad migraine headaches. We went to a neurologist who did an MRI and told me the migraines were sinus-induced and that Tyler needed to go to an ENT."

Barbara knew exactly who to consult: board-certified otolaryngologist Devang M. Shah, MD, of Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat.

"We had dealt with Dr. Shah when Tyler was three and had chronic ear infections," she explains. "I had a great experience with him then, so I went back."

Balloon Sinuplasty

"In the past, there were few good options for patients with chronic sinus conditions," notes Dr. Shah. "Over-the-counter medications only treat the symptoms, while overuse of antibiotics has become a

community-wide problem due to some bacteria developing resistance to standard antibiotic therapy. For many, all that's really needed is for the sinuses to be opened in order to relieve the problem."

However, the traditional surgical approach can be aggressive and lead to significant time away from school or work, notes the doctor.

Fortunately, now there is a happy medium between constant medications and invasive surgical intervention.

"Balloon Sinuplasty technology is an FDA-cleared, catheter-based system for patients suffering from sinusitis," says Dr. Shah. "The technology uses a small, flexible sinus balloon catheter to open up blocked sinus passageways, restoring normal sinus drainage and function."

Advancing the tiny catheter into the sinus cavity, the surgeon then places a sinus balloon into the area to be treated. When the balloon is inflated, it gently restructures and widens the walls of the passageway while still maintaining the integrity of the sinus lining.

"The safety profile of this procedure is one of its main benefits," notes Dr. Shah. "This is especially important in the pediatric population, where the sinuses are very small. Balloon Sinuplasty allows us to achieve a greater degree of safety while managing to open the sinuses and drain them adequately."

Breathe easy

Barbara says she appreciates how diligently Dr. Shah worked for a nonsurgical solution before even recommending Balloon Sinuplasty.

"He tried everything possible to help my son," she emphasizes. "Antibiotics seemed to help, but as soon as he came off them, the infection would come right back."

Balloon Sinuplasty was ultimately the best option.

"The procedure was a lot less intense than I thought it would be," adds Barbara. "The next day, Tyler acted like he'd never even had surgery!"

Most importantly, she says, it worked.

"It's been weeks, and Tyler hasn't been congested," Barbara marvels. "He's got his appetite back, and he's even starting to say he smells things better now. He's doing great."

She thanks Dr. Shah for suggesting the leading-edge procedure. "I have the utmost respect for Dr. Shah," assures Barbara. "He works very well with children, and I trust him wholeheartedly."

"This was the best thing I've ever done for my son."



Devang M. Shah, MD, is board certified in otolaryngology. After receiving his medical degree with honors from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Brunswick, NJ, he completed his surgical internship and residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, in 1997. Dr. Shah is a member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology — Head & Neck Surgery and has served as the chair of the Department of Surgery at Florida Hospital Fish Memorial, Orange City. He is also the coauthor of several journal articles investigating the relationship between microscopic inner-ear structures and hearing function and has presented his work at various research conferences.