

## **Press Release**

For Immediate Release

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### **Common Ear Disease Causes Deafness, Meningitis, Facial Paralysis**

There is a common ear disease that can lead to severe complications including deafness, meningitis, and facial paralysis. “Few people have heard of a cholesteatoma but we see it all the time” according to Dr. Glenn W. Knox, a clinical associate professor at the University of Florida and the head of the Mandarin Hearing and Balance Center in Jacksonville, Florida. Dr. Knox notes that “cholesteatoma” is a misnomer. “It has nothing to do with cholesterol” he says.

Cholesteatomas can form as a cyst behind the eardrum. These cysts are made of skin cells which multiply. As the cholesteatoma grows, it can damage structures in the middle or inner ear. Bacteria can also grow inside or near the cyst. Hearing loss and dizziness can ensue. The bone behind the ear, the mastoid bone, can then become infected. Since the facial nerve goes through this bone, and the nerve controls the muscles of the face, it can be damaged by the cholesteatoma. This results in disfiguring facial paralysis.

There is a thin plate of bone between the middle ear and the brain. Sometimes, a cholesteatoma can grow right through this bone and wreak havoc. Meningitis or brain abscess can result which are catastrophic. Death can occur in rare untreated cases.

According to Dr. Knox, a patient can have a cholesteatoma and not even know it. The problem can go undetected for years. Sometimes only a microscopic examination of the ear by an ear specialist can reveal the problem. More commonly, patients will seek medical attention when they develop pain in the ear, hearing loss, dizziness, and/or drainage from the ear.

Dr. Knox notes that patients with these problems need to be evaluated by an ear specialist. X-rays, especially CT scanning, can determine the extent of the problem. Surgical treatment using microsurgical techniques is the procedure of choice for treating cholesteatoma.