Department of Ear, Nose and Throat Diseases, Head and Neck Surgery

Portrait Gallery Chairmen 1885 - 2009
Opening of our
ENT Portrait Gallery
Dear ENT colleagues
Dear Sir / Madam

We are proud to look back on a long-standing tradition in our ENT Department. This is why we would like to show our appreciation for our former Chairmen of Department through our portrait gallery.

Prof. Dr. med. Marco Caversaccio
Director and Chairman of the ENT Department
Inselspital Bern

Prof. Dr. Hubert Steinke
Chairman of the Institute of Medical History
Bern University
175 years of ENT at the Inselspital

The roots of the ENT Department at the University of Bern’s Inselspital go back to 1841, when the first Ear Outpatient Department on the continent was founded here.

Bern was for once ahead of its time, with only Ireland and England being quicker off the mark. However, it was a slow and rocky start. ENT was not yet an established specialism in the middle of the 19th century. The first Outpatient Department was part of the Eye Department and led by its Chairman. From the 1860s, ear treatment activity seemed to have fallen asleep. It was not until 1885 that the specialism became independent, with an Otolaryngological Institute and an Outpatient Department.

In 1909, an In-Patient Department with 15 beds was added to the Outpatient Department for the first time. However, this did not mean the battle was over. A chronic lack of space and unfulfilled modernisation requests characterised the period up to the 1940s. Departures of Department Chairmen to Basel and Zürich were signs of the tense situation. From 1950 onwards, the Department has been able to enjoy increasing consolidation, thanks to long-serving Chairmen and a focus on surgical interventions and subspecialisation, and has continued to see dynamic development through to the present day.
Before 1885

From the period before 1885, Wilhelm Rau (1804-1861) deserves a special mention. He had been Professor of Ophthalmology since the foundation of the University in 1834. From 1841, he also introduced an Ear Outpatient Department into his Department, the first on the continent. There he mainly diagnosed inflammations, polyps and hearing loss. However, the possibilities for treatment were very limited. Professor Rau published work about his experiences and also wrote a textbook on ear diseases.
Prof. Adolf Valentin
Chairman of the Inselspital ENT Department
1885-1908

Prof. Valentin established ENT as an autonomous specialism in Bern. He qualified as a university lecturer in 1871 and was appointed as an associate professor in 1885. His greatest merit was the foundation of an Otolaryngological Institute and a University Outpatient Department in 1885. He renounced his associate professor’s salary to finance the Department. Prof. Valentin deliberately only published a small amount of work and fully committed himself to teaching and the Department.
In addition to his private practice, Prof. Lüscher worked without pay for 16 years as an assistant to Professor Valentin, before becoming his successor. The first Department with 15 beds came into being under his leadership in 1909. He was elected as the first ENT chair in Bern in 1923. Surgical interventions and treatment for hearing loss became key pillars of the Bern Department under him.
Prof. Erhard Lüscher
Chairman of the Inselspital ENT Department
1931-1941

Prof. Lüscher, the son of Prof. Friedrich Lüscher, focused on the physiology of hearing processes. Although he was Chairman of Department, he was “only” an associate professor. His applications for a chair in 1937 and 1939 were rejected due to a lack of money, so he took over the professorship in Basel in 1941. Aspects which he developed there included audiology.
Prof. Luzius Rüedi
Chairman of the Inselspital ENT Department
1941-1948

Bern was only a stepping stone for Prof. Rüedi too. He qualified as a university lecturer with Prof. F.R. Nager in Zurich and went back to Zurich as the successor to his teacher in 1948, after his time in Bern. He did research on acoustic trauma and worked on the surgical treatment of otosclerosis.
Prof. Franz Escher  
Chairman of the Inselspital ENT Department  
1948-1975

The phase of long-serving Chairmen of Department and continuous expansion began with Prof. Escher. In 1972, he created the Department of Audiophonology. One of his specialisms was the removal of the hypophysis and the access to this pituitary gland discovered by him. The Franz-Escher medal, an award of the Swiss Society of ORL, was named after him.
Prof. Markus Neiger  
Chairman of the Inselspital ENT Department  
1975-1991

Prof. Neiger introduced microscopic surgery of the middle ear and of the eardrum, but in particular of ossicles at the Inselspital. He enabled the creation of a largely autonomous Department of Oral Surgery.
Prof. Rudolf Häusler
Chairman of the Inselspital ENT Department
1991-2009

Prof. Häusler dealt in depth with vertigo and labyrinthine hearing loss. It became a subspecialisation within the ENT Department under him. He specialised in measures for the acquisition and improvement of hearing (cochlear implants) and surgery for vertigo.
Prof. Marco Caversaccio  
Chairman of the Inselspital ENT Department  
2009 to present

Prof. Caversaccio took over the management of the ENT Department from Prof. Häusler in 2009. His main focus is medical technology with the latest developments in navigation, endoscopy and robotics in the field of nose, ear and skull base surgery.
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