



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

Hugh D. Curtin, MD, FACR Class of 1972

Hugh D. Curtin, MD, FACR is a radiologist specializing in imaging of the head and neck. He is Chair of Radiology at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary and Professor of Radiology at the Harvard Medical School. His academic work deals with imaging of head and neck tumors and diseases of the temporal bone. Most of his time is spent in patient care with a major commitment to teaching.

Dr. Curtin was born and raised in Canton, New York, a small town 130 miles north of Syracuse. His father was the chairman of the English Department at St. Lawrence University and his mother taught there as well. After high school in Canton, Dr. Curtin attended St. Michael's College, University of Toronto. In January of his senior year he was accepted into the freshman class at Upstate Medical School. He has a vivid memory from the anatomy class in his first month in Syracuse. That September, as students struggled with heavy loads of memorization, common wisdom held that "it's all downhill after head and neck." Everything was easier and you would be able to survive medical school, if you could just make it past the difficult head and neck section of anatomy. Dr. Curtin never quite got past that hurdle and is still deeply involved with that subject today.

His interest in imaging began at Upstate. The nationally recognized radiology department provided outstanding teaching to the medical students. The ability to see structures deep within the human body made a very definite impression. After Upstate, Dr. Curtin did his radiology residency at the University of Pittsburgh under Dr. Ralph Heinz and then spent a year at the Ostra Sjukhuset in Goteborg, Sweden learning pediatric radiology and angiography under Bo Jacobsson. He then returned to Pittsburgh to become a staff radi-

ologist. In Pittsburgh, Dr. Curtin began doing head and neck radiology. His first exposure was not really driven by a specific interest but was really because nobody else wanted to do it and he was the most junior attending radiologist.

At that time, a new radiology department was being built at the Pittsburgh Eye and Ear Hospital. Having difficulty finding a suitable lead radiologist for the department, Dr. Bertram Girdany, the new Chair of Radiology at the University of Pittsburgh, asked Dr. Curtin to take the position on an interim basis. For preparation, Dr. Girdany sent Dr. Curtin to study with Dr. Jacqueline Vignaud, one of the world's leaders in temporal bone imaging. She was the chief of radiology at the Fondation Ophthalmologique Adolphe de Rothschild in Paris.

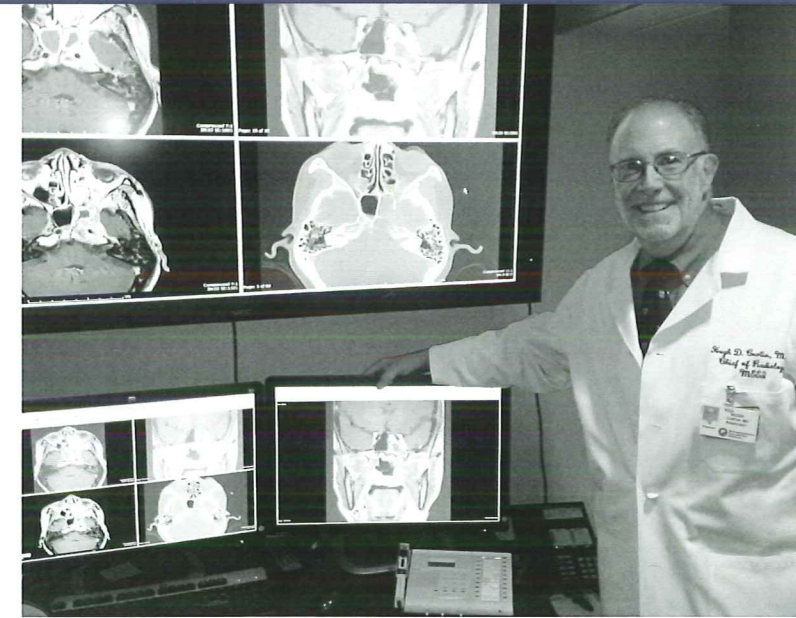
As Dr. Curtin began his work at the Eye and Ear, a revolution was occurring in medicine. Sectional imaging, with computed tomography and then magnetic resonance imaging, was transforming the way we evaluate patients and define disease. Dr. Curtin participated in the development and application of these new techniques to the head and neck and skull base region. Working closely with otolaryngologists to identify various anatomic landmarks and better delineate the spread of disease during this exciting time became the primary direction of Dr. Curtin's career. Visualizing tumor margins and defining how a tumor moves through tissues along previously invisible pathways changed how surgery was planned and performed. Indeed, the advent of sectional imaging was a major reason that the field of skull base surgery progressed so rapidly at that time. No longer was surgery an exploration; the surgeons knew the locations of the margins of the tumor and the relationships to critical structures before beginning the operation.

A close working relationship with surgeons has always been a major resource to Dr. Curtin. He credits his interactions with Dr. Eugene Myers and Dr. Jonas Johnson (Upstate '72) for helping him to learn head and neck imaging. The constant feedback correlating surgical findings with the imaging appearances took the place of textbooks. In many cases, the descriptions of anatomy of the head and neck in the literature were inconsistent and anatomic dissection and constant correlation allowed an understanding not only of the anatomy but also of why some tumors have the appearances that they do.

From Pittsburgh, Dr. Curtin moved to Boston to take the position of Chair of Radiology at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary. With the support of Dr. Joseph Nadol and Dr. Frederick Jakobiec, he continued his work correlating imaging findings with anatomy and pathology and continued developing imaging approaches to various clinical problems relating to the eyes, ears, nose and throat.

Dr. Curtin has held the position of Head and Neck Editor for the American Journal of Neuroradiology and Associate Editor of the journal Radiology. These two publications are considered the leading journals in his field. He has served on the editorial boards of numerous other journals. He has authored or coauthored over 150 peer reviewed papers and written numerous reviews and chapters. He has lectured extensively in the United States and around the world. In Pittsburgh and now in Boston, a major amount of his effort has focused on publication of the textbook Head and Neck Imaging which he coedits with Dr. Peter Som. The fifth edition has just been published.

In recognition of his contributions to the field of head and neck imaging, Dr. Curtin has received the Gold Medal of the American



Society of Head and Neck Radiology (ASHNR) and the Presidential Citation of the American Academy of Otolaryngology- Head and Neck Surgery. He has served as President of the ASHNR as well as President of the North American Skull Base Society. He continues to be active in radiology and surgical societies and works with the American Board of Radiology.

The radiology department at the Infirmary is an integral part of the radiology residencies and neuroradiology fellowships of all of the Harvard Medical School teaching hospitals. Trainees from these programs and visiting fellows from many different countries study in the department every year. Dr. Curtin is particularly proud of having received the teacher of the year award from the Massachusetts General Hospital radiology residents and also the teaching award from the Otolaryngology residents of Harvard Medical School.

Being in the right place at the right time was a major factor in Dr. Curtin's career. It also played a major role in his private life when, while in Pittsburgh, he met and married Carole Livingston. They have been married just over thirty years and currently live just west of Boston. Carole and Hugh have three wonderful children, Matthew, Eric and Rachel who are the pride and joy of their lives. ■

*Bio submitted by Dr. Curtin

