

# Research Scholar

# Following Her



HC: Did you have a particular reason for choosing this area of specialization?

Dr. Teufert: I decided that I wanted to be an ENT surgeon in my third year of medical school, when I realized the vast array of conditions that could be treated medically and surgically in this specialty, for both children and adults. My fascination with otology and neurotology increased during my residency in a hospital that was a referral center for tumor removals and skull base surgery, where I was able to participate in several surgeries involving the hearing structures and related systems. At the end of my training, I was certain that I would pursue a career in this field.

**K**aren Teufert, M.D., an Otolaryngologist and ENT Surgeon from Brazil, has extended the usual one-year format of HEI's Research Scholar Program. She has spent three years at the Institute to pursue an interdisciplinary program in basic science research and clinical studies with scientists and physicians in multiple departments. Dr. Teufert took time from her busy schedule to discuss her experience with us.

Dr. Teufert: I was born in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and after a short stint as a professional ballerina, I earned a medical degree at the Federal University of Paraná, a renowned medical school in southern Brazil. I then completed a specialization in Otolaryngology directed by Dr. Aldo Stamm at the Professor Edmundo Vascoloncelos Hospital in São Paulo. I was board certified in Otolaryngology in 1999.

HC: Can you explain your areas of specialization in the hearing health field?

Dr. Teufert: Otolaryngologists are physicians trained in the medical and surgical management and treatment of patients with diseases and disorders of the ear, nose and throat (ENT), which is why they are commonly referred to as ENT physicians. Here in the U.S., ENTs also treat related structures of the head and neck, although in Brazil, head and neck surgery is not part of our training.

HC: How did you first learn about the House Ear Institute and its Research Scholar Program?

Dr. Teufert: Dr. Stamm, the program director of my training program and residency in Otolaryngology had observed surgeries at the House Ear Institute more than 25 years ago. He advised me that if I wanted to learn from the best, this was the place to be. Then I found a quote by an Italian physician who had studied at HEI and likened it to a "Mecca" for otology that ENTs had to visit at least once in their careers. I found the quote very amusing, but now I've also found it to be very true – I've not found or heard of programs offered elsewhere which provide this level of collaboration, organization and structure.

HC: To give our readers an inside look at your experience here at HEI, can you name some of the research projects you've been collaborating on, and name the scientists and physicians who've guided you?



# Dreams

Dr. Teufert: I've been pursuing both basic science and clinical research at HEI. In the clinical field I've worked with John House, M.D., on a project involving extrusion rates and hearing results in ossicular reconstruction. I worked on two projects with Antonio De la Cruz, M.D. – a study of tympanosclerosis and long-term hearing results after ossicular reconstruction, and a study of congenital aural atresia and long-term surgical results.

***“My stay here at HEI has been an incredible journey.”***

I'm currently collaborating with Drs. Brackmann and Hansen on a paper about chondrosarcoma of the skull base, and another paper with Dr. Slattery on cerebrospinal fluid otorrhea. In the field of basic scientific research, I worked with Fred Linthicum, M.D., on a study of Paget's disease and sensorineural hearing loss, and am currently working with David Lim, M.D., in the Cell and Molecular Biology Department. I'm working in the Section on Pathogenesis of Ear Diseases, where our goal is to understand the process of ear diseases at the cell and molecular level. It has been amazing to work

with these physicians and scientists because I've been a fan of theirs from the beginning and now I'm working with them.

HC: You've certainly been busy here at HEI. How do you intend to use all this information and experience you've gathered here, as you move forward in your career?



Dr. Teufert: I plan to continue being involved in research for the rest of my career, even though there is no funding for research in Brazil. I plan to continue with my academic career here in the U.S., and divide my time between clinical ENT practice and basic research. I'll share my knowledge with my native country by participating in conferences, meetings and educational courses.

HC: Thank you for providing our readers with a capsule summary of your experiences at the House Ear Institute. Any final words to share with our readers?

Dr. Teufert: Follow your dreams, even if others try to discourage you! Your future is what you decide it will be. My stay here at HEI has been an incredible journey. I've grown as a person and as a professional under the guidance of amazing people who make me love my chosen profession more and more each day. I'll always be grateful to them for their contributions to my career in medicine and science. ♦

\*\*\*\*\*

*The one-year Research Scholar program at HEI is available to physicians, foreign or domestic with a fluency in English, who have completed an ENT residency and are interested in otology or applied otologic research. The program includes opportunities to take part in basic and clinical research projects, clinical and surgical observation, attend lectures and weekly meetings, participate in HEI's temporal bone course, and observe surgical and clinical videotapes. More than 25,000 research scholars and visiting physicians have participated in this and related programs at HEI since 1946.*