

Crowe Society Alumni Spotlight

Susan D. Emmett, MD, MPH

Residency Graduation: 2016



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**Tell us about your career from graduation to the present.*

My career is dedicated to expanding hearing health access for rural and underserved populations in the US and globally. After residency, I spent six months at the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, AK and completed the Fisch otology fellowship in Lucerne, Switzerland. My first faculty appointment was at Duke University, where I held joint appointments in Head and Neck Surgery and Communication Sciences and the Duke Global Health Institute.

In 2022, I was recruited to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences for a unique opportunity to found and direct the UAMS Center for Hearing Health Access, the first center of its kind in the world. At UAMS I have joint appointments in Otolaryngology and Epidemiology, hold the inaugural Thomas McGill Chair in Otolaryngology, and will be promoted to Professor of Otolaryngology this July.

As a surgeon scientist, I work on the entire continuum of hearing health access, from large, randomized trials to device development, validation studies, cohort studies, and cost-effectiveness analyses. I work closely with policymakers and government leaders to transition research findings into practice, facilitating policy change that will ultimately transform access to care for rural communities. I founded and direct the Global Hearing Loss, Evaluation, Advocacy, and Research (HEAR) Collaborative, the only international research network dedicated to expanding hearing health access, which now has collaborators in 28 countries. I also direct HEAR-USA, a distinct, US-based network with six sites. The Center for Hearing Health Access currently leads two randomized trials in three regions of rural Alaska and Appalachia that collectively reach 20,000 children in 100 schools. We also have ongoing projects in rural Arkansas, Sierra Leone, and South Africa.

**What are you most proud of in your professional life/career?*

I am incredibly proud of the Center for Hearing Health Access and the innovative work we are doing to transform delivery of hearing care across rural America and the globe.

**Favorite hobbies or activities away from medicine.*

I am into all things outdoors – running, swimming, cycling, and tennis. You can usually find me running with my two boys (ages 3 and 2) in a double stroller in the evenings.



Dr. Emmett with her husband, Dr. William Steinbach, Chair of Pediatrics at University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and Pediatrician-in-Chief at Arkansas Children's, and their sons, John (3) and Davis (2).

**What is your favorite memory from your residency days?*

The lasting friendships developed with co-residents and faculty.

**What is your most poignant memory from your residency days?*

I can still feel the palpable excitement during my T32-supported research years of having the opportunity to develop the advanced skills in public health, community-based randomized trials, epidemiology, and statistics that I needed to launch a career blending otolaryngology with global health and policy.

** What advice you would give residents now?*

Be bold and follow your dreams. If you want to carve a new path in our field, develop the foundational skills you will need across related disciplines and seek actively seek mentorship to provide support along the way. Often the best mentors for creative and new paths will be in different fields.

**How do you think your practice and our specialty will change in the coming years?*

One in five people have hearing loss – a total of 1.6 billion people worldwide – and 80% of affected individuals live in rural and underserved communities with limited access to care. The traditional medical model of caring for one patient at a time is entirely inadequate for a public health problem of this scale. In the coming years, we are going to see scaling of innovative new models of care that make specialty care accessible directly in rural communities. Technology innovation, from telehealth to artificial intelligence and systems integration, will change the way we practice and allow us to efficiently reach much broader populations that we can currently see in brick-and-mortar tertiary care practices.



Dr. Emmett delivering a TED talk at TEDGlobal in Arusha, Tanzania in 2017. She is the first-ever otolaryngologist to become a TED Fellow.

Watch it here: <https://youtu.be/-nKdufEaL8k?si=6Yq7CLFFkIOuwDiA>