

Crowe Society Alumni Spotlight



Zahra N. Sayyid, MD, PhD

Residency Graduation: 2025

Neurotology Fellowship Graduation: 2027

Neurotology & Skull Base Surgery Fellow - FY26
Department of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery
Johns Hopkins University

**Tell us about your educational background and training history.*

I grew up in the suburbs of DC in northern Virginia in a multicultural household with my older brother, who in many ways I have to thank for my initial interests in pursuing medicine as well as sparking my research interest in regeneration. Shortly after starting as an undergraduate at Stanford in 2008, I joined Alan Cheng's research lab studying cochlear hair cell development in a neonatal mouse model. Over the years, as I learned more about the intricacies of the inner ear, from hair cells to synapses, the tonotopic organization of the cochlea to the molecular markers of the utricle, I fell in love with all aspects of the field. Ultimately, I completed my MD/PhD from Stanford in 2020, with my dissertation focus on vestibular hair cell regeneration. My time in residency has strengthened my clinical passion for otology and neurotology, and I will be completing my training with a fellowship in neurotology and skull base surgery at Hopkins.

**What are some of your favorite memories from your residency days?*

From starting as an intern with my "Fast Five" cohort right in the beginning of the COVID pandemic to teatime in Dr. Carey's office, getting married and becoming a mother to two beautiful children, the last five years have been filled with wonderful lasting memories both in and out of the hospital.



Drs. Chris Maroun, Michael Cheng, Alia Mowery, Sarek Shen, and Zahra Sayyid—
"Fast Five" starting class of 2020—with their children.

**What advice would you give residents now?*

Learn as much as you can from as many people as you can. In addition to senior residents, fellows, and attendings, don't forget that scrub techs, nurses, SLPs, audiologists, and therapists have a wealth of information as well. And don't forget to take care of yourself—eat when you can, sleep when you can, and maintain hobbies outside of medicine to keep you grounded and give you perspective.

**Where do you see yourself in ten years?*

My goal is to pursue an academic career as a surgeon scientist. I would like to hold the role of both bedside clinician and bench scientist, collecting tissues in the operating room to study in the lab and then translating those lab findings into practical applications in the operating room, with the ultimate goal of identifying potential therapeutic targets for early detection, treatment, and even prevention of hearing and balance disorders.

**What do you like to do outside of medicine?*

While I love hiking, running, and backpacking, lately my time outside of the hospital has been spent trying to keep up with my 2-year-old son and baby daughter who was born in May.



Baby Laila