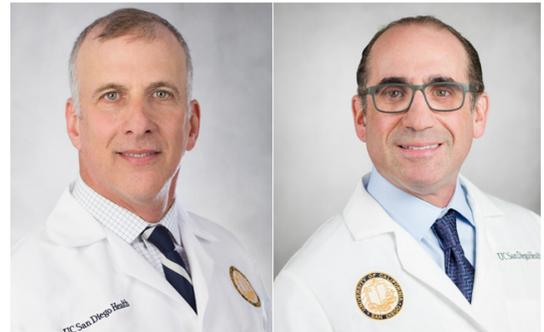


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Renowned Surgeons Launch Acoustic Neuroma Program at UC San Diego Health

UC San Diego Health has expanded its treatment of rare brain tumors by launching a specialized program in the diagnosis and treatment of acoustic neuromas and complex skull base tumors. The new program will be led by Rick Friedman, MD, PhD, and Marc Schwartz, MD, internationally recognized authorities on the effective treatment of these challenging cases. Patients are currently being accepted into the program.



Rick Friedman, MD, PhD, and Marc Schwartz, MD, are international authorities on the effective treatment of acoustic neuromas, brain tumors and inner ear disorders.

“This patient-centered program further establishes UC San Diego Health as a premier destination for the treatment of all forms of brain tumors and inner ear disorders,” said Bryan Clary, MD, surgeon-in-chief, UC San Diego Health and chairman of the Department of Surgery at UC San Diego School of Medicine. “Drs. Friedman and Schwartz bring incredible expertise to our extraordinary team of surgeons and researchers. UC San Diego Health is committed to ensuring that patients in the San Diego region have access to the very best care possible for common and complex surgical conditions.”

An acoustic neuroma or vestibular schwannoma is a rare, non-cancerous growth that represents up to 10 percent of all brain tumors. Approximately 3,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Because acoustic neuromas develop on the eighth cranial or vestibulocochlear nerve, hearing and balance can be impacted. Initial symptoms are tinnitus or ringing in the ear and one-sided hearing disturbances.

“Reuniting Drs. Friedman and Schwartz at UC San Diego Health means patients will benefit from a team with unsurpassed expertise and experience,” said Jeffrey Harris, MD, PhD, chief of otolaryngology. “Their high hearing preservation and low complication rates are the best in the country. Together, they have helped thousands of patients with these difficult tumors.”

Acoustic neuromas range in size from less than 2 millimeters to more than 4 centimeters or more than 1.5 inches in length. Large tumors can cause severe compression of the brainstem and be life-threatening. The majority of acoustic neuromas are nonhereditary. However, 5 percent are associated with a genetic disorder called neurofibromatosis type 2.

“Drs. Friedman and Schwartz are published experts in their fields whose research is broadening our understanding of acoustic neuromas,” said Alex Khalessi, MD, acting chief of neurosurgery. “Their study of tumor biology and genetics, especially in relation to schwannomas and neurofibromatosis type 2, may one day help prevent the development of these tumors. In the interim, their tremendous collective surgical expertise expands our ability to manage the most complex brain tumor cases.”

Genetic cases of acoustic neuromas demonstrate two-sided tumors that may result in deafness. Auditory brainstem implants can help restore some sound perception to these patients. Also, cochlear implants can be used if the cochlear nerve is preserved following surgery. Both options are offered at UC San Diego Health.

Friedman comes to UC San Diego Health from Keck Medical Center and the Acoustic Neuroma Center at University of Southern California. Prior to USC, he treated patients for more than 15 years at the prestigious House Clinic in Los Angeles. Friedman received his medical degree as well as his doctoral degree in molecular genetics from UC San Diego.

Schwartz was previously the senior neurosurgeon at the House Clinic. He is a graduate of Harvard Medical School and completed his neurosurgical residency at Brigham and Women’s and Children’s Hospitals in Boston. He received fellowship training in skull base surgery at Oregon Health and Sciences University in Portland.

Friedman and Schwartz join a team of surgeons who perform complex cranial surgeries, neuro-oncology and the care of pituitary tumors, skull base tumors, cranial nerve disorders and intradural spine tumors. Their expertise extends to other types of tumors as well, including meningiomas and epidermoids when they occur in the typical location of acoustic neuromas.



Kristine Siwek is the patient navigator for the acoustic neuroma program. She guides patients through their entire experience at UC San Diego Health.

The acoustic neuroma team includes specialists from surgery, radiology, genetics, radiation therapy, audiology, and rehabilitation.

To learn more about the team's patient-centered approach to the diagnosis and treatment of acoustic neuromas at UC San Diego Health, call Kristine Siwek at 858-657-5376 or visit: health.ucsd.edu/specialties/surgery/otolaryngology/areas-expertise/Pages/acousticneuroma

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