

In Memoriam: Jack M. Kartush, M.D., 1952 to 2025

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It is with a heavy heart that we inform you of the loss of one of our most esteemed colleagues, Jack M. Kartush, M.D. Dr Kartush passed away on June 22, 2025, surrounded by his loving family after a long illness. Jack was a superb surgeon, innovator, mentor, and friend. A pioneer in facial nerve monitoring, Jack was instrumental in its development and application during otologic and neurotologic surgery.

Jack was born in the Detroit area and did his undergraduate studies at Michigan State University. He attended medical school at the University of Michigan, where he made the decision to pursue Otolaryngology instead of Neurosurgery. Influenced by Dr Malcolm Graham, Jack completed a neurotology fellowship at the University of Michigan. He was an attending staff physician at the University of Michigan until leaving to join Dr Graham, Dr Ted McGee, and Dr Dennis Bojrab to form the Michigan Ear Institute (MEI) in Farmington Hills, Michigan, in 1987. It was at MEI that he spent the majority of his distinguished career.

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As a gifted surgeon, Jack helped train over 60 neurotology Fellows. He was the Neurotology Fellowship director at MEI for over 12 years and was the driving force to lead MEI into one of the first ACGME-accredited fellowships. He served as MEI president from 1987 to 2012.

Jack authored over 220 manuscripts, books, and book chapters. He played a major role in education in the Academy of Otolaryngology, receiving the Honor Award in 1990 and the Distinguished Service Award in 2014. On the state level, Jack was President of the Michigan Otolaryngological Society in 1991 and was the first to bring Osteopathic ENT physicians into the Society. In 1996, Jack became President of the American Neurotology Society, where he served as a thoughtful and progressive leader.

Perhaps Jack's most important contribution to the field of neurotology centered around facial nerve monitoring, where he was a major investigator in its development. His initial work began in 1985, leading to the development of the facial nerve integrity monitor (NIM), which is used in common practice today.^[1] Jack was also an innovator. He introduced Kartush stimulating dissectors. These are surgical instruments insulated to their tips, which allow continuous neural monitoring during dissection and have greatly improved patient outcomes.

Jack became the founding President of the American Society of Neurophysiological Monitoring (ASNM) in 1991. He brought a greater understanding of neurophysiological monitoring to our field and, in 2021, authored a comprehensive document outlining "Best Practices in Facial Nerve Monitoring," which was published in *The Laryngoscope*.^[2] This helped establish safety and quality metrics in the emerging discipline of facial nerve monitoring.

Jack's passion for innovation carried over to patients with chronic ear disease and otosclerosis. He patented several prostheses, including the Kartush incus strut and the Big Easy stapes prosthesis. He developed the over/under tympanoplasty technique, which today is our "go to" procedure at MEI for large tympanic membrane perforations.^[3]

In addition to his many medical achievements, Dr Kartush was an accomplished musician. As a surgical resident, Jack was awarded the Detroit Metro Times Music Award for Detroit's best guitarist and composer in Rhythm and Blues. He performed in several prominent local bands, appearing on television at Ford Field and Comerica Park in Detroit. He was particularly proud of the soundtrack he produced for Lexington, Kentucky's Fox TV Ten O'Clock News.

Dr Kartush is survived by his wife of 41 years, Christine Kartush, daughter Alison Kartush, M.D. (Varun Shetty, M.D.) and Julia Kartush (Jon Brock), along with grandchildren Otto, Noa, Rory, and Aria.

Our field has truly lost an innovative leader. We at Michigan Ear Institute have lost a trusted mentor and friend.