



ARO 48TH ANNUAL MidWinter Meeting February 22-26, 2025

Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld • Florida

aro.org

2025 MidWinter Meeting FAQ

General Meeting Information:

1. When and where is the meeting taking place?

At the Renaissance SeaWorld in Orlando, FL, beginning with pre-conference workshops on Friday, February 21st, with the official meeting kicking off on Saturday, February 22nd and running through Wednesday, February 26th, 2025.

2. What is the registration deadline and process?

Registration will be open October 7th through the close of the MidWinter Meeting. Early Bird registration rates end at 11:59PM EST on January 6th, 2024. Registration can be accessed via the [Conference Website](#).

3. Is there an attendance fee? If so, how much?

Registration Type	Early Bird Rate <i>thru</i> 1/6/2025	Regular Rate
Regular Member	\$445.00	\$495.00
Regular Non-Member	\$665.00	\$765.00
Student Member	\$200.00	\$225.00
Student Non-Member	\$300.00	\$345.00
Senior	\$150.00	\$150.00
Post Conference Main Session Recordings ONLY w/ Access to the E-posters	\$200.00	\$200.00

4. What is the agenda or schedule of events?

The schedule of events will be available once Poster/Podium reviews are completed by the ARO Program Committee.

5. Are there any pre-meeting workshops or post-meeting activities?

We are thrilled to offer two satellite symposia and two gEAR workshops on Friday, February 21st. We will also offer a number of pre-event virtual sessions. Keep an eye out for additional details as they become available.

1. Pharmaceutical Interventions for Hearing Loss (PIHL) Satellite Symposium

- **Friday, February 21, 2025, from 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM EST** (*local time*)
 - Organized by the Department of Defense Hearing Center of Excellence Pharmaceutical Interventions for Hearing Loss (DoD HCE PIHL) committee. The topic of this meeting is "Investigational medicines for hearing loss prevention and hearing restoration". This is a highly timely topic given both the approval of the first medicine for prevention of cisplatin ototoxicity (PedMark) and the highly promising outcomes from Otoferlin gene therapy interventions presented at the presidential symposium at the 2024 ARO midwinter meeting. Speakers at the session will include ARO members and others who choose to attend ARO after learning about this session.

2. Ménière's Disease Satellite Symposium

- **Friday, February 21, 2025, from 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM EST** (*local time*)
 - Ménière's disease is a disorder of the inner ear that includes episodes of vertigo with possible hearing loss and related symptoms, including ringing or buzzing in the ear and a feeling of pressure or "fullness" in the ear. Episodic in nature, Ménière's can take months or even years to diagnose, which adds to the challenges faced by those suffering from its symptoms. This symposium will bring together researchers, clinicians, and patient perspectives to survey the current state of research and clinical approaches to Ménière's disease. It will identify knowledge gaps and barriers to advancing research on, and treatment of, this disorder. The session is organized in two parts.

6. What networking opportunities will be available?

This year we are striving to make every spare minute a networking opportunity. We are doing this by incorporating a 1-hour lunch break immediately followed by a dedicated hour to spend in the Poster Room and to stop by to see our sponsors & exhibitors. Longer breaks allow attendees to navigate the meeting at a more comfortable pace and encourage everyone to take a moment to have a valued face-to-face conversation! And of course, spARO will again host the Mentor/Mentee Meet & Greet session.

7. What is the dress code for the Hair Ball?

The Hair Ball is a casual, lively dance party. We encourage all attendees to come as you are!

8. Are meals included? If not, what are the dining options?

ARO provides coffee & beverage service during the morning break each day. Within the hotel there are quite a few dining options. [You can read more about them here.](#)

9. Is there a mobile app or online platform for the meeting?

Yes, ARO does provide a mobile app. The app will go through additional levels of testing this year and will be made available in the app store closer to the meeting. We will update our MWM communications with instructions once it is available.

10. What topics will be covered during the sessions?

Please view the list of accepted submission categories below. The final list of categories represented is contingent on the Program Committee review process. If any category does not end up being represented, we will update the list here.

Aging	Inner Ear: Anatomy & Physiology
Auditory Cortex and Thalamus: Human Studies	Inner Ear: Cochlear Mechanics
Auditory Cortex and Thalamus: Structure & Function	Inner Ear: Damage and Protection of Hair Cells
Auditory Nerve	Inner Ear: Damage and Protection of Neurons & Synapses
Auditory Prostheses	Inner Ear: Drug Delivery
Binaural Hearing & Sound Localization	Inner Ear: Membranes & Fluids
Brainstem: Structure & Function	Midbrain: Structure & Function
Clinical Otolaryngology & Pathology	Middle & External Ear
Development: Cellular/Systems	Multisensory Processing/Interactions
Development: Human Subjects	Otoacoustic Emissions
Gene Therapy	Primary Auditory Cortex
Genetics A: Genomics and Gene Regulation	Psychoacoustics
Genetics B: General	Regeneration
Hair Cells: Anatomy & Physiology	Speech Perception
Hearing Loss: Consequences and Adaptation	Tinnitus
Immunology	Vestibular: Basic Research & Clinical

11. Are there any breakout sessions or specialized tracks?

There will be breakout sessions. Session details will be available on the schedule of events.

12. Will presentations or materials be available after the meeting?

All MidWinter Meeting attendees will have access to all main session recordings and e-posters for 30 days once they are posted after the meeting.

13. Is there a social media hashtag for the event?

Please use #MWM2025 to tag the meeting in your social media posts. While it is forbidden to post photos of scientific content, we encourage attendees to post other content while at the meeting.

14. Is there a discounted housing rate for attendees at the headquarter hotel, the Renaissance Orlando SeaWorld?

Yes, ARO has reserved a room block for meeting attendees to receive a reduced rate of \$249++/night. To make your reservations, please [CLICK HERE](#). Book your room before Friday, January 31st, 2025, to receive the reduced rate. Any reservations made after January 31st are not eligible for the discounted group rate.

15. The rate at the Renaissance exceeds my allotted budget, are there other properties nearby?

Yes, within 1 mile of the Renaissance you will find:

- The Homewood Suites by Hilton Orlando Theme Park (.8 miles from the Renaissance)
- The Hampton Inn & Suites Orlando at SeaWorld (.5 miles from the Renaissance)
- The Hilton Grand Vacations Club SeaWorld Orlando (.4 miles from the Renaissance)

While ARO does not have a room block at the aforementioned hotels, at time of publication (10/7/2024), the rates at these properties are within the government per diem for February 2025 ([gsa.gov](https://www.gsa.gov))

Concerns About Host State Legislation:

16. What is the current political climate in the state where the meeting is being held?

Orlando's political character stands in notable contrast to Florida's broader conservative trajectory, with the city maintaining its Democratic-leaning orientation under the long-term leadership of Mayor Buddy Dyer. As a key urban center along the politically significant I-4 corridor, Orlando exemplifies the state's urban-rural divide, consistently supporting progressive policies while being surrounded by more conservative areas. The city's political landscape is heavily influenced by its diverse demographics, including a substantial Hispanic population, particularly Puerto Ricans, and a large service industry workforce tied to the tourism sector.

The most pressing political issues in Orlando revolve around affordable housing, as the city's rapid growth and tourism-focused development have led to escalating living costs. Other key concerns include transportation infrastructure, economic diversification beyond tourism, and environmental sustainability. These local priorities sometimes create tension with state-level policies, particularly regarding education, public health measures, and social issues. Despite these challenges, Orlando continues to pursue progressive initiatives while navigating its role as a Democratic stronghold in an increasingly Republican state, balancing the needs of residents with its identity as a major tourist destination.

17. Are there any recent laws or policies in the state that might affect attendees' safety or comfort?

Orlando maintains visitor-friendly policies, with a strong emphasis on public safety due to its tourism-based economy. The city follows Florida state laws while often implementing local ordinances focused on visitor wellbeing. Key points to note:

1. Public Safety: Orlando has enhanced security measures in tourist areas, with a visible police presence and surveillance systems throughout popular destinations.

2. Transportation:

- Ride-sharing services operate freely
- The city has expanded bike lanes and pedestrian zones in tourist areas
- Zero tolerance for drunk driving with frequent checkpoints

3. General Safety:

- Open carry of firearms is not permitted
- Most major attractions have metal detectors and bag checks
- The city maintains a network of well-lit streets and emergency call boxes in downtown areas

4. Accommodation:

- Short-term rentals are regulated but legal
- Hotels are required to meet strict safety standards

Recent changes to note:

- Florida's Stop WOKE Act may affect some corporate policies at theme parks and hotels
- The state's House Bill 1557 has led some tourism businesses to modify certain programs or displays
- Some restrictions on public protests have been implemented, though these primarily affect residents

Orlando's tourist areas remain highly regulated for safety, and the city continues to prioritize visitor security and comfort. Local law enforcement maintains a strong but unobtrusive presence in tourist zones.

18. Has the organization made any statements about the host state's legislation?

Yes. [You can view it here.](#) [You can also access our SocialOffset campaign here.](#) This allows attendees to donate funds that go directly to their chosen charity local to Orlando, FL which serves as an offset to the tax footprint an attendee has during their attendance at the meeting.

19. Are there any planned protests or demonstrations related to state policies during the meeting dates?

There are no known protests or demonstrations in the area during the conference, nor are any planned in relation to the ARO MidWinter Meeting.

20. Are there alternative attendance options, such as virtual participation?

ARO is offering a Main Session Recordings registration this year. The recordings will be made available after the close of the meeting for 30 days. This type of registration also provides access to e-posters.

21. Has the organization considered relocating the meeting due to concerns about state legislation?

The ARO Executive Office and Council dedicated much of last year to discussing this option due to concerns about state legislation. After extensive deliberation and careful review of our contract obligations, we found that the cancellation fees would be prohibitively expensive and far exceed our available budget. While we take these concerns seriously, the budgetary impact of relocation would be too severe for our organization to absorb. We remain committed to ensuring a welcoming and inclusive experience for all attendees within the current location. We have also taken steps to gather feedback from ARO members regarding what aspects of potential meeting locations should be prioritized when contracting future locations. The sentiments voiced have been taken seriously and have been implemented as guiding principles in the decision-making process.

22. Are there local organizations or resources available for attendees who may need support?

[Equality Florida](#) is a great resource for any attendee looking for specific options or support. Attendees looking to support likeminded businesses can use the Open to All filter on Yelp to guide their spending decisions. [You can access Open to All Yelp list for Orlando here.](#)

23. How is the meeting's host organization supporting or protecting attendees who may be affected by state laws?

ARO is working directly with the Renaissance Seaworld to ensure an inclusive and safe environment for all attendees.

Practical Considerations:

24. Are there any guidelines or recommendations for attendees regarding local laws or potential risks?

Our organization understands that conditions in Florida may create an environment different from other major U.S. cities. While Orlando maintains inclusive local policies, it is subject to Florida state laws that have raised civil rights concerns. We encourage attendees to be informed, consider consulting relevant advocacy organizations for specific advice, and document any concerning incidents. While we cannot change state laws, we are fully committed to ensuring all conference spaces are welcoming and inclusive. Our team will provide support within our capacity and make accommodations where possible to ensure the comfort and safety of all participants. We encourage attendees with specific concerns to contact our conference team for more guidance or support at headquarters@aro.org.

In summary, attendees can take their own proactive steps by:

- **Researching local organizations** that advocate for women's health and legal rights. Groups like Planned Parenthood, the ACLU, or Equality Florida often have updated information on state laws and provide resources for visitors.
- **Having a plan** if healthcare needs arise. It's important to know where clinics and hospitals are, what services they provide, and how to get help in case of medical emergencies.
- **Seeking legal resources**, especially for travelers coming from states with different legal frameworks around women's rights.

25. What is the cancellation policy if an attendee decides not to attend?

Attendees can cancel and receive a refund of their paid amount, less a \$50 service fee, until December 31st, 2024. Attendees are free to assign their registration to another individual at any time. This can be requested by emailing headquarters@aro.org.