



**Paul E. Pedersen, MD**  
**ISMS President**  
**2019-2020**  
**Bloomington, IL**  
**Internal Medicine**

# Archived Materials



Illinois State Medical Society

## President's Forum

Paul E. Pedersen, MD was inaugurated president of the Illinois State Medical Society (ISMS) during its 2019 Annual Meeting.

Dr. Pedersen is board-certified in internal medicine and is Vice President and Chief Medical Officer at OSF St. Joseph Medical Center, Bloomington. Since 1995 he has served on various committees and functions within OSF including local, system wide and Board Committees primarily focused on IT development, Quality & Safety and Ethics. He earned his medical degree at the University of Illinois Chicago campus.

Dr. Pedersen is active in many areas of organized medicine. He has been a member of ISMS since 1980. At the local level, Dr. Pedersen is active in the McLean County Medical Society, where he has served as its president from 1995 through 1996. Since 1992, Dr. Pedersen has served on the board of the Rural Illinois Medical Student Assistance Program (RIMSAP) and is currently board president. RIMSAP is a program started in 1948, sponsored by the Illinois Farm Bureau and the ISMS. It has helped many qualified applicants to hurdle financial needs and other barriers to a medical education. This program has assisted over 800 students with a recommendation and/or loans to the University of Illinois. This program is designed to provide doctors in rural communities in Illinois. Dr. Pedersen will serve as president through April 2020.



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## President's Message

### Meet Your New ISMS President!

#### Paul E. Pedersen, MD

*On April 7, 2019, Paul E. Pedersen, MD, was installed as ISMS' New President*

Thank you for electing me as your new President! I am honored by this opportunity to represent all physicians in Illinois.

Because I have not come to this position through the usual routes of trustee, secretary-treasurer or speaker, some of you may be saying: "Who the heck is Paul Pedersen?"

My journey to this presidency started in 1973, when I first encountered ISMS by applying to the University of Illinois College of Medicine through the Rural Illinois Medical Student Assistance Program (RIMSAP). This program sponsors admission to the U of I in exchange for the promise of returning to rural Illinois to practice.

After finishing residency in Internal Medicine in 1980, I returned to Bloomington, where I joined the McLean County Medical Society. Eventually I became the President, an alternate delegate and subsequently a delegate to the ISMS House of Delegates.

For the last 25 years I have been the Chief Medical Officer at OSF St. Joseph Medical Center in Bloomington, and it has been my great pleasure to lead physicians in improving care for the patients we serve.

Also for the past 25 years, I have been the medical director for the Community Health Care Clinic (CHCC) in Bloomington.

This is a free clinic dedicated to providing population health services to the poor and uninsured in McLean County. We have documented over \$1.5 million per year in community cost reduction through the appropriate management of a difficult and challenging population.

My wife and I were more involved in ISMS and the Alliance earlier in my career, but our involvement declined over time as family and practice lives changed. However, I have enjoyed being on the Board at RIMSAP since the late '80s, and am pleased to have served as its President for the last four years. Last year I was nominated to be the President Elect of ISMS, and you saw fit to elect me. So I am now back at your service!

That's the short version of my story, but there is a larger story to be told here about the changes ISMS is undergoing.

Our leadership development process is growing stronger through the use of our Nominating Committee, created a few years ago to help identify and evaluate candidates for leadership through a strategic process. (For better or worse, that's how you got me!)

We have also streamlined and restructured our Board of Trustees, introducing several new "at-large" trustee seats and reducing the number of trustees who represent geographic regions. These changes are designed to make sure our Board represents a wide variety of demographics in Illinois' medical landscape.

ISMS' changes also feature a new process for policy development, which allows ISMS to take action more efficiently and for all voices to **Be Heard**. Surveying members more often, allowing all members to submit resolutions, and

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## Meet Your New ISMS President! *(Continued)*

dealing with resolutions in a transparent year-round process are all steps designed to make us more responsive to physicians' needs and concerns. If you have an idea for something that needs to be changed, let ISMS help you develop a resolution – it really is the best way for an individual physician to drive change statewide.

As many of you know, we have seen a decline in ISMS membership over the past several years. **However, I'm very glad to say that this year we are seeing an increase in membership in response to some of the changes we are implementing.** I am also glad to say that member engagement is increasing dramatically, as evidenced by the incredible feedback received in response to resolutions in advance of this year's annual meeting – more than 1,000 survey responses!

In order to continue this progress and remain nimble in response to a rapidly changing environment, we will need to be open-minded and willing to try new (and admittedly sometimes

scary) ideas and approaches. We need to be unafraid of failure and utterly transparent when what we do doesn't work as well as planned.

To do this, we need to be even more collaborative and cooperative within and without our Society. To make sure we get the best ideas and potential solutions, we will have to commit to being even more inclusive.

But this we will do, because it's in the best interest of our patients and our fellow physicians. In the end, it's really all about them.

**We have a lot of work to do together. Come. Join me. It's a new day!**

*Throughout my term as president, I can be reached at [DrPedersen@isms.org](mailto:DrPedersen@isms.org). Please don't hesitate to reach out any time!*



## President's Message

### Building a Healthy Community: Your Path to New Heights of Professional Satisfaction? Paul E. Pedersen, MD

Today's healthcare landscape is challenging, to say the least. Numerous systemic issues have left many physicians struggling to keep themselves – and their patients – healthy. We sense the truth of the words spoken by Dr. William Osler, a Canadian physician and scholar (1849 – 1919), in his famous final speech at Oxford University: "There must be a very different civilization or there will be no civilization at all."

Framed this way, the task can seem colossal!

But what if physicians took up the responsibility to make their communities a better "civilization" – one step at a time? What if accepting the greater challenge of building a healthy community is actually a path to new heights of personal and professional satisfaction?

You might ask, "With all that I have to do already, including frustrations with my EHRs, 15 minute appointments for patients, decreasing compensation for the hard work that I do and increasing family responsibilities, how can I find the time and energy to start something else?"

In response, I offer three thoughts of encouragement:

First, start small. Every day we ask our patients to take small steps that add up to big changes, and we should take the same approach. Any project can be divided into bite-sized pieces, and our unique interests and expertise will help us decide where to start.

Second, you will not labor alone. Every community has people willing to work to make things better for themselves and

their neighbors, and physician leadership can help bring them together. More often, the work is already being done, and physician participation can help push existing efforts to the next level.

Finally, humanistic motivations aside, there's plenty in it for you. I know it's easy to focus on the barriers. But speaking from experience, those frustrations tend to melt away when we are engaged with meaningful work that fills us with a sense of accomplishment – even if it happens outside our day job.

A community that is healthy in body, mind and spirit is a thriving community where people actually want to live and work. Helping to create that kind of community is worth the effort and investment, and pays huge dividends to ourselves, as well as our neighbors.

So, how do we start?

- Look at your local Community Health Needs Assessment. If there isn't one, helping develop it might be a great start! It will be eye-opening to find out what your community members think.
- Talk to your local Rotary Club and other civic organizations. Business owners and other engaged citizens have great insight into the needs and opportunities that exist, and are invaluable partners.
- Talk to your physician colleagues, even – or especially – those at other institutions. I think we'd all be surprised at what "coopetition" can create!

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- Learn from other communities who have done this. The Blue Zones Project® is one example where communities marked by extraordinary longevity and wellness are working to help others find similar success.

Whether you have a vision for your whole community to become the next Blue Zone or just want to make a few simple changes in your own neighborhood, ISMS can help with connection and communication. We as physicians are stronger together. Let's BE HEARD.

### **When do you want to start?**

*Throughout my term as president, I can be reached at [DrPedersen@isms.org](mailto:DrPedersen@isms.org). Please don't hesitate to reach out any time!*

## President's Message

### Your Care Can't Wait – It's Time to Reduce the Burden of Prior Authorization

**Paul E. Pedersen, MD**

Our patients count on us to fight for them, battling against their illnesses and challenging any other forces that might stand in the way of their health.

Prior authorization, as currently conceived and implemented, is one of those forces. Nearly every one of our colleagues shares this belief, according to a survey of Illinois physicians conducted last year by ISMS.

And now, we are doing something about it.

I recently sent a letter to the editor to newspapers around the state. You may have seen it in your local paper; it read, in part:

*Charles Darwin wrote that "A man who dares to waste one hour of life has not discovered the value of life."*

*No one knows the truth of this better than someone struggling with a serious illness, for whom every hour of life is hard-won. But all too often, sick people seeking medical care in Illinois must endure delays and denials. The culprit? Prior authorization requirements imposed by their insurance plans.*

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*Delaying medical care can allow diseases to progress, resulting in worse outcomes*

*and making patients suffer unnecessarily.*

*Our patients should be spending their time fighting their illnesses and living their lives, not waiting to find out whether their health insurance plan will allow them to do so.*

*Illinois physicians understand that "Your Care Can't Wait" – and it's time insurance companies understood this too. Common-sense reforms are needed to bring transparency, fairness and simplicity to prior authorization policies. ISMS is leading this effort; more information is available at [www.YourCareCantWait.org](http://www.YourCareCantWait.org).*

Together, we can fix prior authorization and make it work for our patients, friends and neighbors. It's about time.

I am pleased to report that the reforms I spoke of in that letter have now been introduced in the Illinois General Assembly, as House Bill 5510 and Senate Bill 3822. We are deeply grateful to House Majority Leader Greg Harris, Deputy House Republican Leader Tom Demmer, Assistant Senate Majority Leader Linda Holmes, Senator Donald DeWitte, and all the other co-sponsors for their leadership in sponsoring these bills. We are also thankful for the support of the many other organizations that have joined our coalition.

This legislation will indeed bring transparency, fairness and simplicity to prior authorization in Illinois. But it will also face significant opposition, and our elected representatives will need a groundswell of support to help them bring these reforms across the finish line.

It is our responsibility as physicians to provide that support. How? In several ways:

- 1. Tell us your story.** Send us an email to tell us how prior authorization affects your patients and you. Real stories from real people are critically important to drive home the need for these reforms. Your name and other identifying information will not be shared. Sign the petition. Every signature helps to show elected officials that there is overwhelming support for fixing prior authorization.
- 2. Call your legislators.** Your elected officials will be hearing from us, but hearing from constituents is vital as well. Urge them to support the Prior Authorization Reform Act ( House Bill 5510 and Senate Bill 3822) and fix prior authorization for Illinois patients!
- 3. Spread the word.** Tell your colleagues, friends and family about this campaign, and encourage them to join you in taking these steps. Tell your patients who are affected by prior authorization that they can join in the fight as well!

More information is available at [www.YourCareCantWait.org](http://www.YourCareCantWait.org). By working together and speaking with one voice, we have the power to fix prior authorization.





## The Numbers Prove It: It's A New Day for ISMS

**Paul E. Pedersen, MD**

As 2019 comes to a close, I'd like to take a moment to look back and reflect on my time as president so far, and on how much ISMS has accomplished this year for Illinois physicians and patients.

And what a busy year it's been! In my term so far I have:

- Driven at least 5,400 miles, spending 100+ hours in the car (but who's counting?);
- Visited more than 30 hospitals and other facilities, as well as county medical societies, medical groups, schools, and other groups;
- Spoken to hundreds of Illinois physicians, both members and non-members;
- Given press interviews, submitted letters to the editor and otherwise helped to get ISMS' messages out in the media.

When I was sworn in as president back in April, my message was simple: It's a new day for ISMS. I've been privileged to share that message with everyone I've met this year, telling them all about:

- The changes ISMS has made to be more nimble, more transparent, and more inclusive of new voices and new ideas;
- ISMS' many legislative successes in one of the most consequential legislative sessions in memory, from passing Tobacco 21 to securing important patient protections in the state's new recreational marijuana law;
- Our upcoming campaign to fix prior authorization in Illinois, with the message that "Your Care Can't Wait" (more to come on this very soon);
- The reduction of medical licensure fees as a result of ISMS advocacy, and the education ISMS offers to fulfill new state CME mandates; and many other topics.

These changes and victories reinforce the importance and value of ISMS membership, and more and more of our colleagues are engaging with us as a result. In fact, we have seen a net increase in membership of more than 520 dues-paying members compared to year-end 2018, the first such increase in a decade. We have worked to grow our connections with our longstanding group members, and have also established partnerships with multiple new group members, including a state specialty society and the largest independent multi-specialty physician group in Illinois.

In short, ISMS is growing more effective and efficient every day, and more and more Illinois physicians are reaping the benefits of a strong Society through their membership and our advocacy.

I'm excited to see what 2020 will bring for the Illinois State Medical Society and for our profession, and I look forward to meeting even more of you as my travels continue. Thank you for your membership!

Many blessings to you and your families this holiday season.



**Message From Outgoing 2019-2020  
ISMS President Paul E. Pedersen, MD**