

J. Regan Thomas, MD
ISMS President
2021-2022
Chicago, IL
Otolaryngology, Facial Plastic
and Reconstructive Surgery

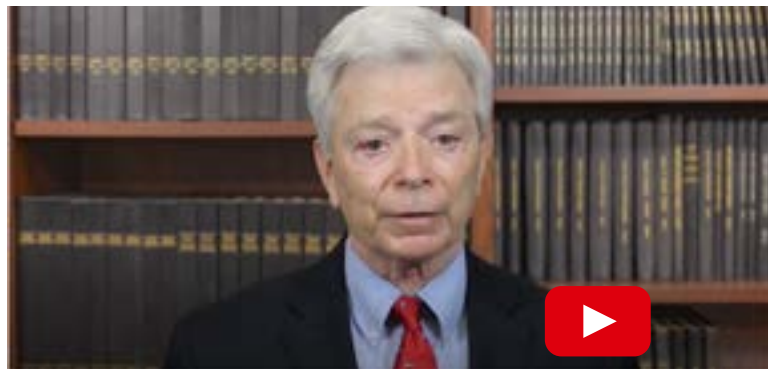
Archived Materials



Illinois State Medical Society

President's Forum

J. Regan Thomas, M.D., was inaugurated as president of the Illinois State Medical Society (ISMS) during its 2021 Annual Meeting, which was held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to otolaryngology, he is board-certified in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery. Dr. Thomas practices at Northwestern Medicine, Chicago, where he is a professor of otolaryngology – head and neck surgery at the Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine. He earned his medical degree from University of Missouri School of Medicine.



**Message From Incoming 2021-2022
ISMS President J. Regan Thomas, MD**

Dr. Thomas has been a member of ISMS since 2001. He is the past president of the American Academy of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery (AAFPRS), past president of the American Board of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery,

and past president of the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. He also served as the president of the Chicago Otolaryngology specialty organization. He presently serves as the AAFPRS delegate to the American Medical Association.

Dr. Thomas has published seven textbooks on facial plastic surgery, along with more than 200 textbook chapters and scientific studies. He previously worked as a television medical reporter and maintains his membership in the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

President's Message

A Successful Year Already and More to Come for ISMS

J. Regan Thomas, MD

I'm only a third of the way through my term as ISMS president, but so far I can say that one of the best parts of the job is being the bearer of good news. Lucky for me, our strong and effective advocacy has yielded a steady stream of good news this year.

Let's start with our latest victory: Last week, Governor Pritzker signed into law Public Act 102-0409, the Prior Authorization Reform Act. This bill was initiated by ISMS, and we led a coalition of other physician and patient advocacy groups to secure its final passage. Reforming burdensome and overused prior authorization processes has been ISMS' top legislative priority since before the pandemic began, and the signing of this new law – which passed the General Assembly without a single dissenting vote in either chamber – marks a key milestone in our ongoing efforts to improve care for our patients and reduce frustrations for our members.

For those who aren't yet familiar, the Prior Authorization Reform Act puts a series of new requirements in place for state-regulated health insurance plans. Among other important provisions, it:

- Increases transparency by requiring payers to make information about prior authorization policies readily available at the point of care.
- Standardizes response times by requiring utilization review organizations to respond to prior authorization requests within specific timeframes.
- Establishes minimum qualifications for individuals who can deny a prior authorization request and specifies the information that a utilization review organization must provide at the time of denial.



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A Successful Year Already and More to Come for ISMS *(Continued)*

- Sets specific time frames for how long a prior authorization approval is valid for acute and chronic conditions, including required time frames if a patient changes health insurance plans in the middle of treatment.

(For more information about this law, check out our fact sheet – and don't forget to share it with your colleagues when discussing the importance of ISMS membership.)

But wait, there's more! In July, Governor Pritzker signed into law an ISMS-supported bill that will **increase patient access to telemedicine** by reducing barriers and aligning telehealth coverage and payment with in-person care.

Public Act 102-0104 contains provisions that echo the governor's executive orders on telehealth, which were drafted with significant ISMS input and issued in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Among other changes, this law:

- Requires all health state-regulated insurance plans to cover all clinically appropriate, medically necessary services delivered via telemedicine by in-network health professionals – including both video and audio-only encounters, e-visits and virtual check-ins.
- Requires plans to reimburse in-network healthcare professionals or facilities for telemedicine encounters on the same basis, in the same manner and at the same reimbursement rate that would apply to the services if the services had been

delivered via an in-person encounter by the in-network professional or facility. (This provision sunsets for nonbehavioral health services only in December 2027.)

- Prohibits health insurers from charging higher deductibles, copayments or coinsurance for services provided through telemedicine than would be charged for the same services delivered in person.

ISMS has developed an [Issue Brief](#) that details the new law and provides some guidance for physicians who deliver telemedicine service – another reminder that ISMS' work goes beyond the statehouse, offering helpful practical resources for individual members.

Of course, much more came out of this year's legislative session, and I barely have the space here to scratch the surface of ISMS' advocacy. That's why our end-of-session legislative report is a must-read for any physician who cares about the future of our profession. It's also why I'm so eager to get in front of as many audiences as possible this year to share the latest updates from ISMS. **Whether you belong to a hospital medical staff; a county, specialty, or ethnic medical society; or another civic organization, I would be pleased to attend your next meeting, either virtually or in person.**

If you bring people who care about the health of our patients, our communities, and our state, I'll bring the latest from ISMS – and if our recent history is any guide, that means I'll get to bring more good news.

President's Message

Why Not Get the Most Out of Your ISMS Membership?

J. Regan Thomas, MD

ISMS membership is an investment in ourselves and our profession – one that will yield greater dividends as our involvement increases.

What opportunities are available for members who want to maximize their ISMS membership?

I'll answer this question with three often-overlapping categories:

1. **Practical benefits** save you time and money. Our license renewal assistance, wealth of CME and other resources, and timely news alerts help you spend more time on patient care and less time staying up-to-date. Our member advocacy team can work directly with you to help clear up issues with third-party payors. And ISMS member discounts on services offered by our benefit partners can save you money on everything from medical supplies to credentialing costs.
2. **Professional benefits** help you take your career to the next level. Our career center offers access to a nationwide database of job openings, and getting involved in our policymaking process can be a boon to your career prospects as well; few forms of networking are more effective than working together on policies that will make our profession stronger. Serving as a council/committee member or as an elected member of the Board of Trustees is also a great way to grow your leadership skills and prepare you for greater responsibility along your career path.

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Why Not Get the Most Out of Your ISMS Membership? (Continued)

- 3. Personal benefits** are realized when you form meaningful relationships with other physicians and physicians-in-training through your ISMS involvement. These relationships can be formal, as in a mentor-mentee relationship facilitated by our Mentor Center, or service as colleagues on an ISMS council or committee. They can also be informal, as we discover things we unexpectedly have in common over breakfast or dinner during an ISMS meeting or event. Regardless, these relationships are among the most rewarding parts of being a physician, and they will only grow richer with time.

What about **ISMS' legislative, regulatory and legal advocacy**, which is the cornerstone of what we do? This cuts across all three categories. As ISMS represents physicians' interests in the General Assembly, other areas of state government and the courts, we achieve victories that yield practical, professional and personal benefits for all Illinois physicians.

When we succeeded in passing the Prior Authorization Reform Act this year, for example, we helped every Illinois physician save time and money that would have been spent on burdensome prior authorizations. Similarly, when ISMS engages in court cases to protect our interests as physicians, the outcomes can help us all sleep better at night.

So maximize your ISMS membership! View this organization as an investment in yourself and our profession. And like any well-managed investment, those dividends can also be passed on to younger generations as we work together to make Illinois a better place to practice medicine.

President's Message



**Farewell Message From 2021-2022
ISMS President J. Regan Thomas, MD**