

It started out as a realization that though patients are central to what pulmonologists and other medical professionals do, there needed to be a way in which patients and their advocates could interact directly with the Society. There needed to be an effective way to communicate patient needs and a way for physicians to understand their perspective; thus the American Thoracic Society Public Advisory Roundtable (ATS PAR) was born.

Many of the founding members of ATS PAR were patients, family members, and advocates who understood the real needs of patients and the lung diseases from which they suffered. The original ATS PAR members articulated those needs and communicated them to the ATS, and bridged the gap between patients and physicians. The implementation of PAR not only created opportunities to strengthen medical care, but also opened the door to collaboration and partnership to increase understanding of lung diseases and to lead efforts to fund treatments and cures.

Now, more than ten years later, ATS PAR is still one of the only patient-represented committees within a medical membership association. ATS PAR remains a vital part of the ATS and is held in high esteem within the organization. ATS PAR is known for its unique ability to respond to patient needs and mobilize efforts to improve patient care, increase research efforts in lung disease, and build advocacy and awareness of lung disease and lung health on a national level.

Additionally, to date, PAR-affiliated member organizations have supported the ATS Foundation research grant program with more than \$6 million in funding for innovative medical research in lung disease. The Chair of ATS PAR is a standing member of the ATS Board of Directors, with a direct line of communication with ATS leadership.

For the past several years, ATS PAR has had the privilege of assigning patient speakers to medical sessions at the ATS International Conference, a scientific meeting of respiratory professionals including clinicians and researchers. The patients share their personal stories with ATS members, giving them an up close and personal look into the lives and experiences of patients with lung disease. These compelling patient stories provide the important and central “patient voice” for the conference attendees and allow research and innovation to move forward with passion while never losing sight of patients. Never before has a medical association elevated patients to such a visible position within its organization. ATS PAR is truly “the patient voice of the ATS.”



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