

## ISPOR's New Executive Director: Q & A with Nancy Berg

The ISPOR 17th European Congress in Amsterdam last year saw something never before witnessed at an ISPOR meeting—a new CEO & Executive Director. With the retirement of Founding Executive Director Marilyn Dix-Smith, a new leader has been identified to lead our Society into the future. Her name is Nancy Berg and *Value & Outcomes Spotlight* recently caught up with her for a brief Q&A session.



**Value & Outcomes Spotlight (VOS):** Tell us how you came to take this opportunity? What was it that excited you about becoming the CEO & Executive Director of ISPOR?

**Berg:** First, let me say that it is a privilege to be at the helm of ISPOR, collaborating with the world's most talented health economists, academicians, researcher, payers, industry and policy makers, and patient groups. I have been in the association management field for nearly 30 years and in 2009, after my husband, Tim Jackson, successfully battled Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma (NHL), I made a decision to begin to focus my career on health care. During his difficult treatment and recovery, we came to appreciate even more the role and brilliance of all pharmaceutical and medical professionals. Tim's treatments were successful and now, over five years later, he remains healthy and cancer-free, and together we support cancer research by participating in fundraisers such as cycling events. Our experience with NHL led me to refocus my career and begin searching for opportunities to apply my association management skills in support of a health care association.

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In 2011, I became the CEO of the International Society for Pharmaceutical Engineering (ISPE), a large global society that hired me to help it focus and reverse long-term financial instability. During my tenure at ISPE, the society achieved a steadier situation by introducing first-ever research projects on drug shortages involving the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other stakeholders; a global project focused on patient experiences with drug packaging and a multi-year quality metrics project, among others. In these efforts, my goal was to align diverse stakeholders around common concerns and encourage collaboration toward knowledge thus achieving better solutions. When I left ISPE for ISPOR, ISPE honored me with their society's highest award for lifetime achievement. Not only was this a tremendous surprise and honor, it was affirmation of my work in building relationships, and building bridges.

I learned of the ISPOR vacancy and was immediately attracted to the mix of people, science, business, and cause. I competed for the position and the ISPOR Board of Directors hired me last year with the goals of a smooth leadership transition and to guide the society as it continues to grow. I am proud to be in ISPOR's employ.

**VOS:** What will be your biggest focuses as the new executive leader of ISPOR? Where do you see the Society going?

**Berg:** Coming into ISPOR following the long tenure of Marilyn is both exciting and needless to say, a bit challenging. Thankfully I had the opportunity to take the reins at two other associations following long-time CEOs and through those experiences learned that listening and respecting the past are critical to success. When a society, business, or even a small group goes through a leadership transition, it is a situation much like when a football or baseball team names a new manager or coach. There will be change in how the team is led and motivated and a change in strategy and expectations—all of which affect relationships, culture, norms, and outcomes. My initial goal is to be a student of the Society's past as preparation for the future, ensuring a successful leadership transition.

What some members may not know is that the job of CEO & Executive Director is both an internal and external facing role. In my internal role, I am working with the staff leaders to establish operational plans and processes to help evolve what was once a small organization that managed conferences of hundreds of people, to a more streamlined operation with a diverse and global footprint. With equal emphasis on my external role, I am working with the Board of Directors to prepare for a strategic planning meeting in February with more than 35 experts from around the world, during which we will discuss and build on ISPOR's Vision 2020 plan and determine specifically our near and longer term priorities.

I am enthused about the opportunity to enhance ISPOR's visibility among decision and policymakers, where I can apply my past knowledge, relationships, and contacts throughout the European Union, Asia, Latin America and in Washington, DC. In past roles, I have collaborated with more than 100 different partners and groups, created policy advisory teams to raise visibility, and achieved success in leveraging the knowledge of the association and its members to support critical decisions. ISPOR is a tremendous repository of knowledge and experiences that has value to decision makers and those parts of the world where health care systems are evolving. I am particularly impressed with ISPOR's commitment

to key topic and regional issues. For example, ISPOR's Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Council, the umbrella organization bringing together HTA policy makers from Europe, Latin America, Asia, North America and other parts of the world, is active as an unbiased, neutral discussion platform that offers unprecedented opportunity for dialog and information sharing among countries. Similarly, ISPOR's new Patient Roundtable offers discussion forums among like-minded patient organizations, informing and involving these groups of ISPOR's mission, its work and the work of members.

**VOS:** What kind of changes can we expect to see at ISPOR? What things are going to definitely remain the same?

**Berg:** ISPOR has been a valued, respected and successful resource for its members for nearly 20 years. The society is doing good things and this is evident in membership activity and growth, attendance at events and through the increasing impact of our publications, papers and guidelines. Quality and integrity are the hallmarks of ISPOR; members can be assured that the ISPOR experience, its valuable tools and resources will continue to be world class. Members can also anticipate ISPOR taking a more visible role with decision makers, engaging payers and patient groups, and initiating discussions that are pertinent, pointed and productive. In the coming months and years, members may also begin to notice improvements in our staff operation—the result of internal process mapping, systems enhancements and staff development. My internal operational goal is to reflect the sophistication of our membership (which is quite a benchmark, considering that ISPOR members represent the brightest minds in a complex, scientific field).

**VOS:** What does ISPOR need to do to continue driving the discussion on affordable health care?

**Berg:** First, ISPOR needs to be at the table and in the discussions. That means having focused strategies and plans around building or extending our relationships with key influencers. We must continue to understand the issues; what is driving change and how change is affecting every segment of our membership as well as their organizations and patients, of course. Moreover, discussions on affordable health care mean different things in different parts of the world and so we must acutely understand regional differences and cultures (and respond accordingly). As a global society of 9,500 members and over 7,700 regional chapter members, ISPOR has the resources and knowledge to make a difference by educating members and policy and decision makers world-wide. My job as your CEO & Executive Director is to not only be a relevant voice, but to organize all 17,200 voices to make an even greater impact.

**VOS:** Thank you for these insights. Congratulations on the new job and good luck! ■

## ISPOR STUDENT TRAVEL GRANTS AND ISPOR MEETING TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Applications for ISPOR Student Travel Grants and ISPOR Meeting Travel Scholarship Awards are now being accepted for the ISPOR 20th Annual International Meeting in Philadelphia, PA, USA, 5th Latin America Conference in Santiago, Chile, and 18th Annual European Congress in Milan, Italy.

### **STUDENTS AND FELLOWS MAY APPLY FOR AN ISPOR STUDENT TRAVEL GRANT:**

Each grantee is awarded COMPLIMENTARY REGISTRATION AND SHORT COURSES by ISPOR prior to the Meeting/Congress/Conference. Included are round trip coach class travel, hotel, meals, and conveyance up to \$1,300 USD for Annual Meetings and European Congresses and up to \$1,100 USD for Latin America and Asia-Pacific Conferences that will be reimbursed after the event per the ISPOR Travel and Reimbursement Policy. Details can be found at: [http://www.ispor.org/student/Travel/grant\\_info.asp](http://www.ispor.org/student/Travel/grant_info.asp).

### **NON-STUDENTS MAY APPLY FOR AN ISPOR MEETING TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP:**

Each awardee is awarded COMPLIMENTARY registration to an ISPOR International Meeting or European Congress or Regional Conference; complimentary ISPOR SHORT COURSE REGISTRATION (up to 4 courses per Meeting/Congress/Conference); and up to \$2,500 USD for air fare (coach), transportation and lodging expenses (per ISPOR travel policy). Details can be found at: <http://www.ispor.org/awards/MeetingTravelScholarship.asp>.

> To apply for a Student Travel Grant, go to: <http://www.ispor.org/student/Travel/grantApp.asp>.

> To apply for an ISPOR Meeting Travel Scholarship Award, go to: <http://www.ispor.org/awards/MeetingTravelScholarship.asp>.

### **APPLICATION DEADLINES**

20th Annual International Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, USA: May 16-20, 2014  
 5th Latin America Conference, Santiago, Chile: 3-5 September 2015  
 18th Annual European Congress, Milan, Italy: 7-11 November 2014

**Deadline: March 31, 2015**  
**Deadline: 7 July 2015**  
**Deadline: 1 September 2015**