

President of the International Society of Diseases of the Esophagus (ISDE) 2006–2008

Peter J. Kahrilas is a true scholar in the study of esophageal diseases, and he is the epitome of the physician scientist. He has maintained a career that has focused on complex esophageal physiology with sustained funding from the National Institutes of Health for over 30 years. His work has created a deeper understanding of esophageal motility and has translated directly into improved patient outcomes. In parallel to his amazing research productivity, Peter was able to build a large university-based practice focused on complex esophageal diseases. He is a master clinician, as evidenced by his referral base and the numerous awards he has received. On top of this, he is also one of the best medical writers and lecturers in all of gastroenterology, and his ability to synthesize a topic and teach through his publications and his speaking engagements are legendary. His current H-index stands at an impressive 93 as of 2019, and will likely continue to grow. His legacy as one of the greatest esophagologists is secure, and it was only fitting that he was chosen as President of the International Society of Diseases of the Esophagus in 2006.

So, how does one become Peter Kahrilas? It seems the process has to begin at a very early age and it requires some gentle nudging by key people in your life. Peter was a born scientist who loved engineering and medicine, and he exhibited these interests even before entering college. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Yale in 1975, and enrolled in medical school at the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, where he met one of the first important mentors in his life, DrWilliam Chey, Senior. DrChey was a gastroenterologist who was also an exceptional researcher, and he was truly the first person that directed Peter toward a career in gastroenterology. Peter went to Case Western Reserve University for his residency training and went on to complete his fellowship in gastroenterology at Northwestern University in 1984. Not satisfied, Peter went to the epicenter of esophageal research, the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, to work with Wylie J. Dodds from 1984 to 1986 as a research fellow. This time in his life had a major impact, and he went back to the Northwestern to build a program that mirrored the Dodds approach, developing his own research



center focused on oropharyngeal dysphagia, gastroesophageal reflux disease, and esophageal motility.

Peter quickly procured his first independent R01 in 1990, and ever since that point, his research literally exploded, becoming one of the most productive esophageal researchers in history. A routine perusal of reference lists at the end of all current papers on esophageal physiology and disease will usually cite at least one of Peter's landmark papers. Examples of this type of work include work on peristaltic dysfunction from the 80's, data on the role of hiatal hernia in gastroesophageal reflux from the 90's, and more recently, the Chicago Classification from the early 2000's. A review of his curriculum vitae reveals over 300 peer review articles, with over 50 articles in Gastroenterology and the American Journal of Physiology *each*. The remaining studies are mostly published in Gut, JAMA, NEJM, Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology and Neurogastroenterology and Motility, among other top surgical and radiology journals. Although Peter would tell you that his papers and grants are his most prized awards, he has certainly been recognized and honored by his peers on every possible front, from invitations as a grand round speaker to major organization awards. In fact, he is the current recipient of the Beaumont Prize in Gastroenterology from the American Gastroenterology

Association that honors his contribution in clinical and translational research to the field.

Given all of these accomplishments, it was not surprising that Peter would eventually become President of the ISDE in 2006. However, Peter's ascension into the President role marked another important transition for the ISDE. The ISDE had primarily been a surgical society and the selection of Peter Kahrilas truly marked a change in the culture of the ISDE. Peter opened up the membership for all healthcare providers focused on esophageal diseases, and one of his primary goals during his presidency was to improve the diversity of the membership. Peter helped usher in the more modern version of the ISDE, and he was able to help smooth this transition because he had tremendous respect for the history of the organization. This was evidenced by his Dent Honorary Lecture for the 12th World Congress of the International

Society for Diseases of the Esophagus in Kagoshima, Japan, in 2010. His lecture was an inspiration for all of the younger members of the ISDE, and it was fitting that this lecture was given in Japan, the birthplace of the ISDE.

Peter continues pushing the envelope to this day in both research and clinical practice, and I am certain this will continue for a very long time. It is my honor and privilege to provide this presidential biography, as Peter has been the most important role model in my career, and his impact on the ISDE has been transformative.

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