



Illinois Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons

10 W. Phillip Rd., Suite 120 • Vernon Hills, IL 60061
(847) 680-1666 • Fax: (847) 680-1682 • Email: Rich@ILeyeMD.org

Eyes on Illinois

A member publication for ISEPS members • June 2020

President's Message

A Year of Challenges and Opportunities



The year 2020 started out with great hopes and anticipation for eye doctors in this year of “perfect vision.” Now, it’s just six months later and we’re left to wonder, *what is happening?* To be sure, the novel coronavirus pandemic has left much of the world in a state of shock, and it certainly has affected our practices in monumental ways. At the same time, the country is focused on crucial civil rights issues while the ongoing trials and tribulations of the election year also are demanding our attention.

For Illinois ophthalmologists, we squeaked in just under the wire with the ISEPS-COS Joint Conference back in early March, just as COVID-19 was beginning to make its presence known in the United States. However, a successful conference it was, with a record attendance and some fantastic presentations.

More recently, we’re adapting to a new way of living with face masks (even outside of the O.R.), social distancing, and a surplus of Zoom. ISEPS is adapting, as well. Earlier this month, we held our first “Virtual Town Hall” conference featuring a prominent state official, ophthalmology leaders and an international partner who signed-in live from Vietnam. On the member service front, we formed a purchasing consortium for PPE which resulted in our initial order of 7,000 face masks purchased by ophthalmologists and our dermatology colleagues across the state.

I hope you enjoy this issue of “Eyes on Illinois.” But more importantly, I hope that you, your families and office staff remain healthy. I also hope that you are beginning emerge from the pandemic shutdown as we start seeing our patients again (even if in a restricted manner). As always, the Illinois Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons stands ready to assist you in any way possible. Wishing you all a blessed and safe summer.

Sohail Hasan, MD PhD
ISEPS President

ISEPS International Virtual Town Hall Focuses on COVID-19 Challenges

ISEPS hosted our first-ever International Virtual Town Hall on June 10, 2020. Featured speakers included Ngozi O. Ezike, MD, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health who has been at the epicenter of managing the COVID-19 pandemic response for the state. She discussed the challenges of practicing in the time of COVID-19 for ophthalmologists. In addition, Dr. Tamara Fountain, President-elect of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (and ISEPS Past-president) presented the national outlook on restoring ophthalmology in the United States. Nguyen Xuan Tam, Director of the Community Development Fund in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam, shared information about the coronavirus in Vietnam and how eye care is adapting. ISEPS has worked with Tam on a number of projects. He awoke in the early hours of the morning in Vietnam to be with us! Finally, ISEPS President Dr. Sohail Hasan summarized the key successes

of the recent ISEPS/COS meeting in early March, and a report on the state of ophthalmologists and their respective practices in Illinois in the COVID-19 era based on an ISEPS membership survey. He also discussed some of the projects that ISEPS is working on to help restore eye health to our patients here in Illinois, as well as our outreach program to key Illinois state legislators during the pandemic. The Town Hall was attended by a large number of ophthalmologists and practice managers across Illinois and in neighboring states.



Member Services

PPE Purchasing Consortium Off to a Fast Start

ISEPS has partnered with the Chicago/Illinois Dermatological Societies, the Kansas Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons, the New York State Ophthalmological Society and the Connecticut Society of Eye Physicians in forming a consortium to purchase hard-to-find PPE supplies. N95, KN95 and 3-Ply disposable surgical masks are part of the initial order. Because of our combined ability to buy in quantity, we have been able to negotiate a favorable price. The initial order from Illinois was for 7,000 pieces! We are working with a vendor who is well-known to us and who works with suppliers who are reliable. The N95 masks are NIOSH certified, and we feel confident as to the quality of items acquired.

Visit the ISEPS website for details and to place an order: <https://www.ileyemd.org/ppe-project>

Illinois Ophthalmologists Share Views on Covid-related Topics

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to affect all of our lives, ophthalmologists and practice managers from across the state shared their views in a survey conducted by ISEPS, concluding in early June. Here's a quick snapshot of the results:

- Regarding the IDPH requirements for a COVID-19 test before surgery, 75% of patients were able to get the test. However, 30% of doctors said patients experienced some sort of problem in accessing the required test. These results and some comments posted in the survey have prompted ISEPS to carefully examine the COVID test requirements, particularly relating to certain procedures such as laser surgeries.
- Fully 96% of practices reported eliminating elective surgeries during the initial phases of the pandemic restrictions. This is in keeping with the strong recommendations from the AAO and other national medical organizations.
- The COVID-19 limitations resulted in a quarter of practices remaining fully staffed, and another quarter maintained at least 50% staffing. Four percent of practices completely closed.
- Twenty percent of practices expect to be "back to normal" in the next month or so while 28% expected to be back later this fall, and 20% said next year. Interestingly, 27% said they are not returning to normal in the foreseeable future.
- When it comes to government assistance programs, 86% of practices took advantage of the SBA's Payroll Protection Program, and 44% applied for other forms of financial assistance, including the CMS/Medicare advance payment program, EIDL grants, CARES Act stimulus funds, emergency loans and bank lines of credit.
- 72% of practices have used telemedicine options with their patients.
- Regarding PPE supplies, there are current or anticipated shortages cross the board, including N95 masks (78% experiencing shortages), hand sanitizer, paper disposable surgical masks, gloves, face shields or removable eye protection, and wipes. There was strong interest in participating in a purchasing consortium (see article above).
- Members said the biggest challenges facing them presently is decreased patient volume, managing patient flow with social distancing procedures, restoring the financial health of the practice, and especially addressing the fears of patients who are concerned about safety in the medical office.

Governmental Affairs

ISEPS Names Two "Legislators of the Year" while Governor Pritzker Issues Proclamation



Rep. Jim Durkin with ISEPS VP Dr. Nina Goyal (left), COS President Dr. Manvi Maker, and Dr. Sohail Hasan, ISEPS President.

Two leaders in the Illinois General Assembly received recognition from the Illinois Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons for their work on behalf of patient safety in eye care. Senator Don Harmon (D-Oak Park), recently elected President of the State Senate, and Representative Jim Durkin (R-Burr Ridge), Republican Leader in the House of Representatives, both earned the 2020 ISEPS Legislator of the Year Award.

Sen. Harmon took a leading role in recent years in his previous position as co-chair of the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules where the state Department of Financial and Professional Regulation was trying to push through a provision that would have allowed optometrists to perform a number of surgical procedures. Meanwhile, Rep. Durkin has for many years been a strong friend and advocate for ophthalmology and maintaining the current high standards for licensing eye surgeons in Illinois.

Proclamation Recognizing "50 Years of Service"

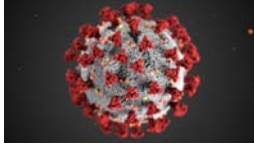
Governor J.B. Pritzker issued a proclamation in honor of the 50th anniversary of the association which was founded on July 20, 1970. The proclamation, presented at the ISEPS-COS Joint Conference on March 6th by Senator Don Harmon, recognized the Illinois Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons for its 50 years of service. The Governor congratulated "all ophthalmologists in Illinois for their work every day to preserve the vision and eye health of Illinois residents."



Senator Harmon presents the Governor's proclamation to ISEPS President Dr. Sohail Hasan and VP Dr. Nina Goyal.

COVID-19 Update

ISEPS Launches Coronavirus Information Page



The Illinois Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons is keenly aware of the public health implications of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) matter. This has been and will continue to be a rapidly developing situation. As always, the health and safety of our members, corporate sponsors, speakers and practice employees are first and foremost in our concerns. In order to help keep the ISEPS community up to date, the Society developed a website – updated regularly – to provide access to credible resources for information all in one place. Links include the CDC, the Illinois

Department of Public Health, national medical organizations and reliable statistical sources. This page also is where we will make announcements concerning cancellation/postponement of planned events or other factors.

View the ISEPS Coronavirus Information Page here: <https://www.ileyemd.org/coronavirus>

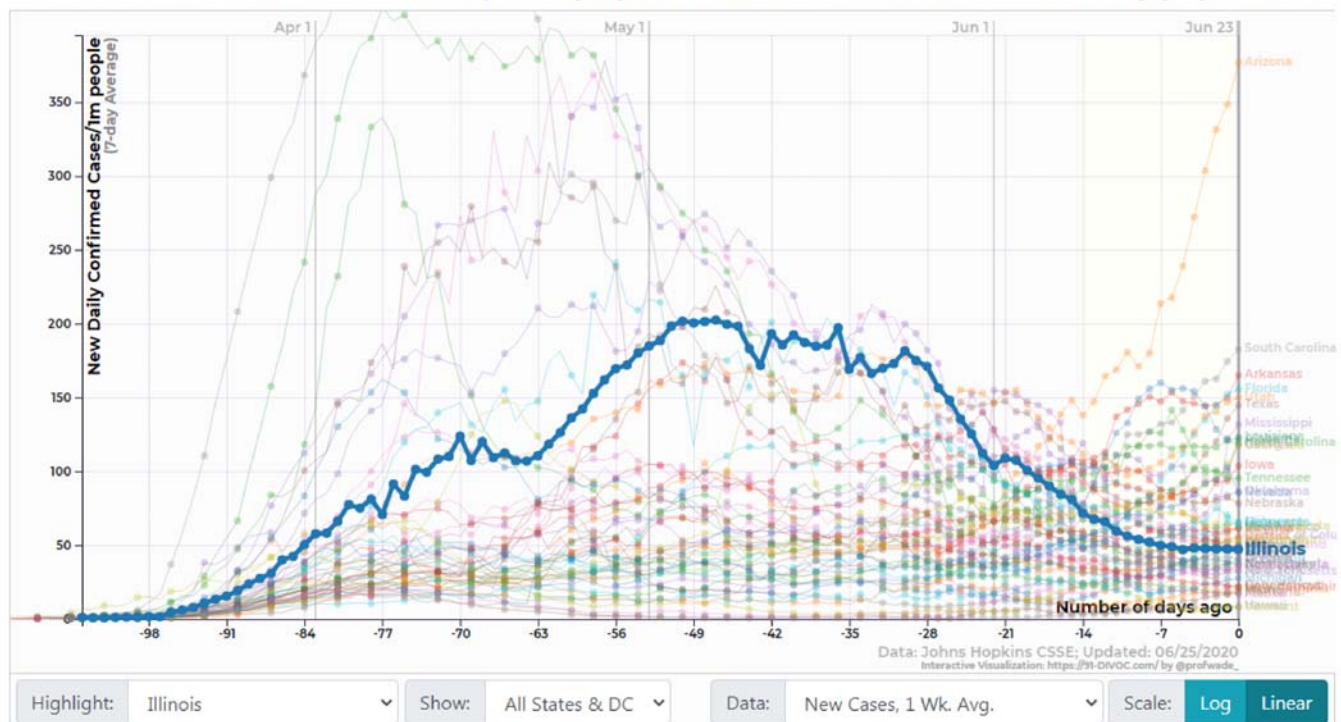
Statistics and Resources

According to the Illinois Department of Public Health, as of June 24, Illinois had 138,540 confirmed COVID-19 cases with a total of 6,770 deaths. Compared to other states, Illinois is trending better at the present time (see chart below).

Breaking News . . . Governor Pritzker has announced that Illinois will move to “Phase 4” in the *Restore Illinois* plan which is based on science and statistical goals. IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike said, “You did it. Illinois is being touted across the country as getting it right. That was accomplished with the ‘3 W’s - Washing your hands, Wearing your mask, and Watching your distance.’ But it is important to remember that the virus is still with us, and we do not yet have a vaccine, so we still have to remember the actions that got us to this point.”

What Phase 4 Looks Like: There is a continued decline in the rate of infection in new COVID-19 cases. Hospitals have capacity and can quickly adapt for a surge of new cases in their communities. Additional measures can be carefully lifted allowing for schools and child care programs to reopen with social distancing policies in place. Restaurants can open with limited capacity and following strict public health procedures, including personal protective equipment for employees. Gatherings with 50 people or fewer will be permitted. Testing is widely available, and tracing is commonplace. **How we can move to the next Phase 5:** Vaccine, effective and widely available treatment, or the elimination of new cases over a sustained period of time through herd immunity or other factors.

New Confirmed COVID-19 Cases per Day by US States/Territories, normalized by population



State Government Update

The Illinois General Assembly's normal legislative session this year was significantly disrupted due to the pandemic. During its abbreviated session, lawmakers passed bills enhancing the ability to vote by mail and also providing legislative oversight of the governor's reopening plans, as well as creating a task force to study business interruption insurance issues. The education omnibus bill also was enacted which includes waivers for student teachers and remote learning. Meanwhile, the State Board of Education is expected to release school opening guidance for the coming fall session which "strongly encourages" in-person classes, but requiring masks.

The Governor recently announced \$900 million in grants that will go to help small businesses impacted by COVID-19 closures. He also announced increasing funds to the Illinois Housing Development Authority to help fund rent relief programs while also extending the current ban on residential evictions until July 31.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security reported that the unemployment rate in Illinois fell two percentage points to 15.2% in May. Meanwhile, the Illinois State Fair has been canceled and Attorney General Kwame Raoul tested positive for COVID-19 and is now quarantining in his home. On the telehealth front, the chairs of the House and Senate Insurance Committees – Rep. Thaddeus Jones and Sen. Napoleon Harris – plan to hold "stakeholder" meetings with the insurance working group members beginning in August to discuss revisions to the Illinois telehealth law.

Optometry Expansion – We are pleased to note that no legislation for optometric expansion was proposed or considered during the 2019 or 2020 sessions of the General Assembly following the defeat of the proposed optometric surgery rule in 2018. As always, ISEPS and its lobbying team remain "on guard."

The next scheduled session for the General Assembly is set for November 17-19 and December 1-3.



2020 is an Election Year



November 3rd is the date set for the fall General Election. In addition to the President of the United States, a US Senator (Durbin seat) and all members of the US House of Representatives, voters will cast ballots for 20 of the 59 State Senate seats and all 118 State House seats. Early voting begins on September 24th, and October 18 is the last day to register to vote through the Board of Elections online system.

The Illinois Medical Eye-PAC is well-positioned to participate in the fall campaigns. With the coronavirus situation, candidates are greatly restricted in their normal campaign activities. We are thankful to the nearly 100 members who have contributed \$35,000 to the political action committee this year. Much of that amount was donated during the ISEPS-COS Joint Conference in March . . . so thanks to all!

ISEPS-COS Joint Conference

Scenes from the 2020 – PERFECT VISION Annual Meeting

It's likely that the forces of nature were on our side when the ISEPS-COS Joint Conference took place on March 6th just a short week or two before the coronavirus "shutdown" began. Nevertheless, 240 ophthalmologists, 162 ophthalmic technicians and 55 practice administrators were joined by 47 exhibiting companies at the Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont for a day-long series of lectures and panel discussions.

We were pleased to host some prominent guest speakers, including: AAO Past-president George Williams, MD; Academy CEO David W. Parke, MD; ISEPS Kresca Lecturer Susmita Pati, MD MPH, Chief Medical Program Advisor for the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science® at Stony Brook University; COS Gifford Lecturer Carol Karp, MD, the Richard K. Forster Chair in Ophthalmology at Bascom Palmer; Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness Lecturer Brian Kim, MD of Professional Eye Associates in Dalton, GA; and Special Guest Michael W. Belin, MD, Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at the University of Arizona College of Medicine.



Meet the ISEPS Board of Directors and Key Staff

President

Sohail Hasan, MD PhD
Orland Park

Vice President

Nina Goyal, MD
Chicago

Secretary

James F. McDonnell, MD
Maywood

Treasurer

Paul Phelps, MD
Chicago

Immediate Past-president

Balaji Gupta, MD
Lombard

At-large Director

Nicole Bajic, MD
Arlington Heights

At-large Director

David Morimoto, MD
Joliet

Resident 3rd year (Stroger)

Karl Becker, MD
Chicago

Resident 2nd year (Rush)

Sarah Carballo, MD
Chicago

Resident 1st year (UIC)

Ricky Cui, MD
Chicago

AAO Councilor

Evan Lagouros, MD
Peoria

AAO Councilor

Kathryn Colby, MD PhD
Chicago

Past-president/Legislative

Chris Albanis, MD
Chicago

Illinois Medical Eye-PAC & ISEPS Foundation Chair

Ronald C. May, MD
Deerfield

ISEPS-COS Program Co-chair

Vivek Chaturvedi, MD
Harvey

Young Ophthalmologists

Paul Phelps, MD
Chicago

Executive Director

Richard Paul
Vernon Hills

Lobbyist

Dan Reitz
Steeleville

Illinois Society of Eye Physicians & Surgeons

10 W. Phillip Rd., Suite 120

Vernon Hills, IL 60061-1730

Phone: 847-680-1666 • Fax: 847-680-1682

Email: Rich@ILeyeMD.org • Website: www.ILeyeMD.org

Established in 1970 — Celebrating our 50th Year of Service