



The Society of Thoracic Surgeons  
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# News

**For Immediate Release**

**STS Press Release**

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## **Richard L. Prager Elected President of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons *University of Michigan surgeon plans to expand outreach and further enhance the STS National Database***

HOUSTON (January 23, 2017) – Cardiothoracic surgeon Richard L. Prager, MD, from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, today was elected President of The Society of Thoracic Surgeons during the organization’s 53rd Annual Meeting in Houston.

“The STS presidency is something that I never considered as a goal or an expectation,” said Dr. Prager, the Director of the Frankel Cardiovascular Center and the Richard and Norma Sarns Professor of Cardiac Surgery at the University of Michigan. “This is very much an honor for me, and it represents the culmination of my career, as well as an opportunity.”

With a father who was an internist and a college job as an operating room scrub technician, Dr. Prager became interested in cardiothoracic surgery at an early age. “Cardiothoracic surgery seemed like a new frontier and had the biggest challenges,” he said. “There was no question what I wanted to do.”

After earning his medical degree from the State University of New York in Brooklyn, Dr. Prager trained in general and thoracic surgery at the University of Michigan. He began his surgical career in 1978 at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., and eventually returned to Ann Arbor, initially joining the Cardiac and Thoracic Surgical Group at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital. There, Dr. Prager was the Medical Director of the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) Coronary Artery Bypass Project and the Director of Cardiac and Thoracic Surgery. In 1999, he joined the University of Michigan’s cardiac surgery faculty.

“I spent half of my career in private practice, specializing in cardiac and general thoracic surgery, and half of my career in academics,” explained Dr. Prager. “So, I have experienced two distinct sides or aspects of cardiac and thoracic surgical practice. This experience has helped me understand both realities: complex academic medical centers and private practice scenarios. I’m fortunate to have an understanding of how the qualities of both are critical to our success as a specialty.”

An STS member since 1982, Dr. Prager has served on numerous committees and workforces. Most recently, he was the Society’s First Vice President. Dr. Prager also has chaired the Council on Quality, Research, and Patient Safety, the Adult Cardiac Surgery Database (ACSD) Task Force, the Task Force on Quality Initiatives,

and the Database Audit Task Force. In addition, he has held leadership positions in other cardiothoracic surgery organizations, including President of both the Southern Thoracic Surgical Association and the Michigan Society of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons.

As STS President, Dr. Prager is committed to continuing the goals of his predecessors, while focusing on enhancing membership benefits and services. “We will work on becoming a more agile society that has a rich foundation of members and goals, making sure we are the best at representing and facilitating the specialty everywhere,” he said.

A longtime participant in and champion of the STS National Database, Dr. Prager said he will continue being one of the Database’s strongest advocates. The Database is world-renowned as the gold standard for clinical outcomes registries. Established in 1989 as an initiative for quality improvement and patient safety among cardiothoracic surgeons, it has three components—the ACSD, the Congenital Heart Surgery Database (CHSD), and the General Thoracic Surgery Database (GTSD). STS Public Reporting Online enables Database participants to report, on a voluntary basis, their numeric scores on surgical quality measures established by the Society and their corresponding star ratings.

For the future, Dr. Prager said that developing longitudinal follow-up for the ACSD is critical, the evolution of risk models for the CHSD must continue, and increased participation in the GTSD will be a priority. “Using technology to facilitate data entry for all aspects of our Database also is a top priority, as is utilizing the Database for evaluating new technologies in our field,” he said.

With interests in adult cardiac surgery, health outcomes research, patient safety, organizational efficiencies, and education, Dr. Prager has authored or co-authored more than 140 peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters.

“I’ve been rewarded in every way possible in my profession,” shared Dr. Prager. “Now, as President of STS, I have the opportunity, with a great team, to contribute and advance the Society’s goals for the benefit of our specialty. I would like cardiothoracic surgeons around the globe to know that The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is *their* society, and we want to represent and help them in the complex world in which we all practice. All of our members should feel comfortable getting in touch with any of the STS surgeon leaders with suggestions about ways to help the Society represent them better.”

Dr. Prager and his wife, Lauren, live in Ann Arbor, MI. In their free time, the couple stays active by playing sports, including tennis. They have five children and five grandchildren.

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Founded in 1964, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons is a not-for-profit organization representing approximately 7,200 cardiothoracic surgeons, researchers, and allied health care professionals

worldwide who are dedicated to ensuring the best possible outcomes for surgeries of the heart, lung, and esophagus, as well as other surgical procedures within the chest. The Society's mission is to enhance the ability of cardiothoracic surgeons to provide the highest quality patient care through education, research, and advocacy.