

## Introduction

I write to you as a caregiver to my dear sister, Alex, who was diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension, and as the chair of the American Thoracic Society Public Advisory Roundtable (ATS PAR), which is solely dedicated to the integration of the patient perspective into clinical care.

ATS PAR is one of the only patient-centered groups in the United States that is a direct part of a medical membership association. It is known for its unique ability to respond to patient feedback and mobilize stakeholders to improve patient care. ATS PAR bridges the gap between patients and clinicians to create opportunities that open doors to collaboration and partnerships, and increase our understanding of lung diseases.

We build advocacy and raise awareness of respiratory health on a national level. To date, ATS PAR–affiliated member organizations have supported the ATS Foundation with more than \$5 million in research funding. ATS PAR leverages the power of the patient voice in our collective race for innovative treatments, therapies, and cures.

Thanks to the ATS PAR, patients share their disease-related experiences at annual ATS International Conferences, delivering the power of the patient voice to thousands of pulmonary, critical care, and sleep medicine researchers. More than a dozen patients attended ATS 2016 in San Francisco, California, to speak about their reality of living with lung disease.

The pages that follow are the firsthand accounts of patients who bravely shared their stories to large medical audiences to put a “face” to these diseases—to show the “heart and soul” behind the lungs and the conditions. In these intimate stories of resilience, may we find hope and strength.



**Debbie Drell**  
Chair, ATS PAR