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He completed training in pharmacy at Oregon State University in 1983, obtained a master's degree at the University of Texas in 1986 and a PhD in health economics and policy at the University of California, Berkeley in 1992.

Dr. Sullivan has authored more than 450 articles, book chapters and reports. In many of these, he has assessed the evidence and applications of medical technology in relation to coverage and reimbursement decisions. His research interests include health technology assessment, medical decision-making, and economic evaluation of medical technology, including pharmaceuticals. He is past president of the International Society for Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research (ISPOR) and past chair of the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP) Executive Committee of the Format for Formulary Submissions – the United States evidence-based guidelines for formulary decision making.

Dr. Sullivan was a member of the Medicare Evidence Development and Coverage Advisory Committee, Chair of the Regence Blue Shield and Premera Blue Cross P/T Committee, and Chair of the Premera Blue Cross Value Assessment Committee. He was awarded the 2014 Stephen G. Avey Lifetime Achievement Award from the Academy of Managed Care Pharmacy (AMCP), and the 2015 APhA Academy of Pharmaceutical Research Sciences (APRS) Research Achievement Award. In 2020, he was elected to the National Academy of Medicine and in 2022 was elected Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).