



## LETTER

# Letter from the Chair of the Board of Trustees at Society for Clinical Data Management (SCDM)

Sanjay Bhardwaj

December 2021

As I write my final letter as the 2021 Chair of SCDM, I would like to acknowledge the distinct privilege and honor it has been to lead the organization during a year of continued uncertainty and ambiguity. I am immensely proud of how everyone at SCDM—the board, our volunteers, partners and staff—have risen to the challenge of a second COVID year. Both collectively and individually, they have viewed it as an opportunity to further innovate and expand, and to serve our members in new and better ways.

Our annual professional education conference (AC) has always been the primary occasion for our community to meet and interact, where we share and disseminate knowledge within the clinical data management field. It has been the pre-eminent learning and knowledge gaining space for our industry. Under the excellent stewardship of my predecessor, Michael Goedde, one of SCDM's key approaches for tackling the effects of the pandemic was the rapid digitalization of our AC. Moving it to the virtual space provided a highly preferable alternative to cancellation and enabled the continuing education of CDMs without any time delay. Ultimately, our community agreed, and it became the largest conference in the history of SCDM.

Writing this commentary on our 2021 annual meeting allows me to illustrate just some of the innovative work that our SCDM conference team of volunteers and staff has undertaken and how well SCDM as a whole has further adapted to the limitations posed by the pandemic. From the outset, we wanted to produce a highly valuable learning moment that leveraged the power of technology and digital platforms to connect virtually with all our members and partners across the world. With inclusivity as a core value and recognizing the rare combination of circumstances presented by the pandemic, my fellow SCDM leaders quickly identified that we had a unique opportunity to transform our 2021 AC into SCDM's first global conference. Thanks to the tireless support of our EMEA and India leaders who agreed to integrate their regional activities into one global event\*, I am immensely proud

that no other SCDM professional education conference has been more international or more well-attended. In a year where we all have suffered digital fatigue and where many conferences have reported depressed attendance numbers, SCDM has grown its attendance by 50% to over 1,500 attendees and attracted CDMs from close to 40 countries around the world.

On offer through the conference was an awesome lineup of topics ranging the full spectrum of clinical data management, from AI/ML and DCTs to RBQM and Technology, Data and Communication and more. We also featured an expanded range of academia sessions so that all professionals, no matter their level of experience or background, would find plenty of interesting, informative and valuable content. With the theme of 'Future Now', our conference kicked-off in style with an impressive and extremely inspiring keynote presentation given by Professor Chris Lintott, University of Oxford, UK. As a non-industry expert, this was also a first for us. Chris is one of the world's leading astrophysicists, and using his own experience of handling terabytes of new data each day, he offered us a guide as to the future of AI capabilities and how CDMs will be able to tackle increasing data volumes and complexities. He strongly advocated that the future of big data and of AI and ML will be in learning how to collaborate with the machine tools that we've built, rather than necessarily relying on them to take over from us. His keynote session and all other conference sessions are available on-demand; don't miss the opportunity to watch them again!

Another conference first was our ground-breaking session on the pathway to a COVID-19 vaccine, entitled a "A Jab of Hope – Data Management Enabling the Pathway to a COVID-19 Vaccine." The session featured insights from data management heads from Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca, who revealed how they raced to develop their vaccines in record time. I am so proud that members of the SCDM community have played a pivotal role in helping, literally, the entire world. It was a great session and a humbling one when listening to their experiences of having to perform at their very best whilst in the most accelerated and pressured period they have ever faced.

regulatory landscape, RBQM analytics and new data sources were just some of the many critical items under discussion. Other initiatives, new this year, included our informal speaker corners and very popular daily conference summaries; they all added to a greater learning experience for participants.

The quality and value of this year's conference was outstanding, and the extensive catalogue of prominent global leaders in our industry sharing the latest news, best practices and actionable advice was second to none. This has made possible thanks to the generous and unwavering support of our conference co-chairs, the session chairs and presenters, regulatory representatives, committee chairs, exhibitors and sponsors, and SCDM's professional staff at MCI. Thank you all!

My term of office as the Chair is fast drawing to a close, and I shall soon be handing over stewardship of our fantastic organization to Mayank Anand. As I do so, it will be in the full confidence that SCDM has, so far, not just survived the pandemic but further strengthened its leadership role.

Our global conference this year has shown ourselves to be innovative, forward-thinking and embracers of change. No other organization is more credible in leading our industry's evolution from Clinical Data Management to Clinical Data Science.

Thank you for your support and friendship throughout this year. I look forward to meeting you in person next year at our 2022 Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas, on September 11–14.

Kind regards,

Sanjay Bhardwaj  
SCDM Chair of the Board 2021, Past Chair 2022.

*\*Our China conference was held before the decision to switch to a global conference; it was also highly successful and outperformed expectations.*

### Competing Interests

Sanjay Bhardwaj is the 2021 SCDM Chair of the Board

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