



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

# Final Letter from the 2020 Chair, Winter 2020

Michael Goedde

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Dear SCDM Members,

A final letter from the 2020 Chair, to close out this past year for good and fully embrace with great optimism the already started 2021. When I look back to the latter half of 2020, I do recall the uncertainty and concern in the weeks and months leading up to our biggest event of the year – our Annual Conference (AC). Now, a few months after the AC, and having been able to close out the year on solid footing, there is a sense of “We did it!”. With “it” I mean the fact of SCDM not only having survived this 2020, but having embraced the challenge by bringing our AC to a whole new level, in a complete new environment, and with “We” I mean all of YOU, the amazing people who made “it” become a reality.

Going fully virtual was not the only first that happened this year. For the first time since we started our journey of Annual Conferences (ACs) in 1997 in Philadelphia, we combined the North America and Europe, Middle East and Africa ACs resulting in a truly global experience for every participant. We surpassed 1000 attendees for an AC, with people signing up even days and weeks after the conference ended to get access to the recorded content. Lastly, we hired a professional Master of Ceremony, Cathy Smith, who did a fantastic job introducing speakers, interviewing our Co-Charis, as well as providing a more engaging and dynamic flair to the overall set-up.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all the people who put in countless hours, mostly by volunteering, into the successful rollout of the 2020 AC. My list of thanks starts with our dedicated MCI staff who helped the SCDM Board navigate this uncharted territory. I also want to thank our three creative and agile Conference Co-Chairs, all the Session Chairs, Presenters, Poster Developers, Regulatory Representatives, Committee Chairs, and Technical Staff. Finally, I want to especially thank our Exhibitors and Sponsors, who trusted us to provide an environment that would be conducive to present their latest products and offerings in the dedicated Product Showcases. Thank you to all of you!

I want us all to learn and build upon the aforementioned experiences and to take away certain observations for our daily CDM jobs as well as our journey towards Clinical Data Science. Again, as so many times before, we CDM Professionals have to embrace the rapidly changing technology landscapes and regulatory environments, and to adjust to the larger magnitudes of clinical data volumes quickly coming our way. Holding on to the comfortable and known way of doing things and being satisfied with the status quo cannot be an option for us. Rather, we must use our combined backgrounds and experiences to lead our industry and work with Regulators to move towards a truly data-driven clinical research model, which makes optimal use of available technology while keeping a vigilant eye on ensuring data integrity and quality.

COVID closed the door on us in regard to running clinical studies in the traditional way; however, it also opened and accelerated so many new pathways for us. The three recently published [SCDM White Papers](#) describing our journey towards Clinical Data Science sounded in some ways like a distant science fiction version of our known CDM World; but the papers reveal the journey may become part of our daily lives and work much sooner than we anticipated. This is scary on the one hand, but on the other hand, we Data Managers have it in our DNA to continue to reinvent ourselves and not only embrace this opportunity for our profession, but to use it to lead the clinical research industry to a new and exciting place. Such a place is where the development of life-saving drugs can be accelerated by using technology that focuses on patient needs, uses the full computing power available to us, and gives “virtual” a real chance to succeed.

Thank you and stay safe.

Regards,  
Michael Goedde,  
SCDM Chair of the Board 2020, Past Chair 2021.

### Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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