

## Letter From the President

Over the past two months, I have been fortunate to observe the herculean efforts of investigators across the translational spectrum as they tackle COVID-19. Watching a clinical trial move from concept through design, funding, FDA approval, IRB approval, data system creation, and investigational drug distribution all the way to first patient enrolled in less than two weeks is awe inspiring. That trial has already enrolled half the planned sample, which is extraordinary. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Some of the world's greatest statisticians are developing new methods to analyze the data being produced by these trials so we can learn faster without drawing false conclusions.



Informaticists are working day and night to provide ways of coding patient outcomes from electronic health records, and to create massive scale harmonized datasets for discovery analytics. Investigators and coordinators are finding new ways to interact with patients to talk to them about research and gather data. Regulatory scientists and oversight bodies are adapting systems and processes for eConsent and no-touch trial protocols while ensuring all research, not just that related to the pandemic, continues to protect participants. Across the translational spectrum, investigators are studying the health inequities that are arising because of COVID-19, the mental health consequences of living through a global pandemic, the basic pathophysiology of disease, and so much more.

The mobilization of science to mitigate the crisis is astounding. Equally astounding is the duality about science evolving in the public eye – hailed as heroes yet rebuffed with disbelief. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of trust, the level of scientific literacy, and a tendency to favor speed over knowledge in the context of a rapidly emerging infectious disease. I believe our moral obligation is to be arbiters of the truth – to develop or test hypotheses with the goal of finding the right answer, not just any answer, and to disseminate this new knowledge in meaningful ways. Never before has this been more important. This can require difficult decisions about the work we pursue, and how we communicate about it. At this time of global uncertainty, it is incumbent upon us to be ambassadors of rigorous science. From a fireside chat with (less than 10) neighbors, to redirecting the media, this is our opportunity to help guide the global understanding about this disease.

We have an opening to engage the public in a dialogue about the scientific method and why it is the fastest, safest, most effective way to learn the truth about SARS-CoV-2, and how to prevent and treat the devastating disease it causes. It is our chance to make a difference not just for this pandemic, but in how the global community perceives clinical and translational research. We should take this opportunity to stress the importance of research training programs spanning the learning lifespan, and the wisdom of supporting the institutions that have pivoted with astonishing pace to meet the challenge of COVID-19. Sustained support for our scholars and consistent funding for enabling infrastructure and technologies are foundational to our capacity to find solutions to the world's grand challenges.

Inspired by your commitment to solving the problem of COVID-19, I am humbled to serve as this year's President of ACTS. I look forward to working with you to execute on our joint missions of advocacy, education, and collaborative research. I am excited to build from this crisis and to keep the spotlight on clinical and translational research for securing a healthful global future.

Christopher John Lindsell, PhD  
President ACTS

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