

Southern Society for Clinical Investigation

Official Journal - *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*



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April 26, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I am humbled and honored to serve as the 2021-22 President of the Southern Society for Clinical Investigation (SSCI). My first experience with the SSCI was nearly 30 years ago, when I gave my first ever original research oral abstract presentation in cardiac mechanics. This paper was then presented in more comprehensive form at the annual American Heart Association Scientific Sessions and ultimately published in *Circulation Research*. As a young trainee, the SSCI meeting provided me with the needed experience and confidence in delivering a research presentation in front of a broad scientific and clinical audience, and has continued to do so for many other young investigators over the years. In addition to its continued importance for trainees, as an SSCI member and fellow over the past decade, I have been impressed with the many talented clinicians and investigators who have joined the SSCI to maintain its preeminence as the premier clinical research society for academic internal medicine in the Southeast.

I want to first thank the SSCI Immediate Past-President, Dr. Don Rockey, for his exceptional leadership this past year. He led the organization deftly and with expert skill while facing the most challenging of times posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although he was faced with multiple societal challenges related to the pandemic, he spearheaded another outstanding annual SSCI meeting, making full use of a novel virtual platform. Under Don's leadership, the SSCI displayed both adaptability and resilience. I feel fortunate to follow Don as SSCI President, and have truly appreciated his counsel and advice as I take the reins this year.

The SSCI membership remains robust with 402 total members (Fellows, Members, and Emeritus Members) in 2020, a 15% increase from 2019. We welcomed 22 new SSCI Fellows and 33 new Members in 2020, from multiple academic institutions across the Southern US, and beyond! The organization is financially strong with considerable assets. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 SRM Meeting held virtually was a resounding success, with minimal technical glitches, and robust attendee participation. It attracted 738 registrants, who digitally maneuvered through 638 abstracts (381 Case Reports, 257 Original Research) presented by investigators from 57 academic institutions, and attended workshops, plenary sessions with state-of-the-art lectures, and concurrent subspecialty meetings. The Joint Plenary Session focusing on COVID-19 disease was simply outstanding and generated high interest and excitement. A virtual format was no barrier to meeting quality.

What is my vision for the SSCI this coming year and beyond? First, the SSCI has always maintained an unwavering commitment to the development of young investigators in academic medicine. I want to continue this commitment and foster original translational and clinical research by trainees via a variety of mechanisms, including the SSCI Research Scholar Award for young physician-investigators, solicitation of original research by trainees as abstracts for the annual meeting, and partnering with the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences* to highlight important research published by young investigators in the journal. In this regard, I ask the SSCI members to encourage their own trainees to submit original work to the annual meeting, to increase the breadth of science and help raise the bar for abstract presentations. Second, the SSCI has evolved over the years to include a focus on clinical education and training, which has proved very popular with the membership – we will continue this theme during the 2022 SSCI meeting. Third, I want to increase cross-disciplinary interaction among the various subspecialties at the SSCI meeting, to enhance the value of the meeting to the SSCI members. Over the next year, I will be discussing with the SSCI Council new approaches to increase member engagement at the annual meeting and throughout the year, increasing the size and scope of the Society, augmenting original research, and inviting distinguished speakers to deliver lectures on state-of-the-art topics of interest to members and trainees alike.

The SSCI is a unique academic organization that provides value to its members not only via the annual meeting, but throughout the year. I urge the membership to take advantage of SSCI initiatives such as the SSCI Visiting Professor Program and the SSCI Research Scholar Award, and to engage others to join the Society. We now have three membership categories – Member, Fellow and Emeritus – to increase participation among the breadth of academic faculty in our departments. I also encourage all SSCI members to consider submitting original research and reviews to the *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, the SSCI's scientific journal, led by Editor-in-Chief, Dr. Jesse Roman. The *AJMS* just has its 200th anniversary last year, making it one of the oldest medical journals in the US, and had over 1600 manuscripts submitted for consideration last year. I invite you to look carefully at the journal and the value of the published articles.

I am delighted to be able to lead the Society this coming year. I am always open to new ideas on how we can make the Society stronger. I can be reached directly at sprabhu@uab.edu. I look forward to working with all of you.

With best regards,



Sumanth D. Prabhu, MD
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