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Letter from the President

Dear STR Members:

I AM VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY to serve as STR President for the past year and to work with Cris Meyer (Past-president), Jane Ko (President-elect), Sanjeev Bhalla (Treasurer), and Loren Ketai (Secretary). Each individual brings unique qualities to the committee and gives selflessly to the overall mission of the STR. The STR Executive Committee provides leadership and strategic planning for the Society, which really means that we are here to help guide and support the STR committees. I would like to acknowledge some of the accomplishments of STR committees during the 2019-2020 year.

The executive committee created 4 new ad hoc committees: Health and Wellness (led by Cris Meyer and Julianna Czum), Online Content (led by David Naeger), Social Media (led by Chuck Lau), Public Liaison Committee (led by Cris Meyer). With the approval of the STR members at the annual business meeting in March 2020, the bylaws were revised to upgrade 4 STR subcommittees (Mentorship, Big Data, Fellowship, and
Awards) to standing committees, and the bylaws now clearly define their unique missions, membership, and participation in the Executive Council.

The STR signed a collaborative agreement with the Asian Society of Thoracic Radiology (ASTR), thanks to the efforts of Carol Wu. An agreement was also reached with the organizers of the 5th World Congress of Thoracic Imaging, currently scheduled for June 2021 in Rome, allowing STR to host a 2021 meeting in the United States.

Joe Schoepf and the Corporate Relations Committee raised more money for the 2020 annual meeting than ever before. Their fundraising enables STR to provide a wonderful experience at the meeting, a Resident Bootcamp that is free to all medical students, residents and fellows, travel funds for selected in-training presenters of scientific abstracts, and reduced meeting registration fees to participants from countries with lower income levels.

The Education Committee, led by Jeff Kanne, organized an outstanding program for the 2020 annual meeting. Thanks to the willingness of our speakers to either attend or pre-record their lectures, and thanks to a very nimble audiovisual team from Veritas Association Management, we were able to produce a program that adhered closely to the original schedule. Separately from the meeting, the Educational Committee also produces two cases of the month, edited by Kimberly Kallianos (Thoracic) and Cristina Fuss (Cardiac) for @thoracicrad.

The Fellowship subcommittee, now the Fellow and Resident Committee, will be led by Matt Gilman. The STR provides many opportunities for radiology residents and fellows in terms of education content on-line, Resident Bootcamp, travel awards, speaking and poster opportunities, and a social gathering at the annual meeting. During this past year, Brett Elicker, in the role of committee chair, worked with SCARD on the timing of fellowship interviews, establishing an embargo date of December 1st of the third year of residency.

The Intersociety and Global Outreach Committee, led by Sharyn MacDonald, is extending our international reach. The importance of our international collaboration was evident in two of this year’s STR Press Releases. The press releases are managed by the new Public Liaison Ad hoc Committee which, this year, began with Accelerated Silicosis in Engineered Stone Workers (Drs. Catherine Jones (Brisbane), MacDonald, Meyer, Lynch), then Vaping-associated Lung Injury (Drs. Kanne, Sechrist,
Kligerman, Mann, Henry), and culminated with COVID-19 (Drs. Wu, Hongjun Li (Beijing)). The committee was led this year by Cris Meyer. Look for these Press Releases under the Resources tab on thoracicrad.org. Georgeann McGuiness and the Mentorship Committee work very diligently to create and support Mentor-Mentee dyads, so that junior faculty can receive the guidance they need for career development. Please respond to their survey and add your name to this list.

The STR is asked to endorse or collaborate on a number of practice standards and guidelines each year. Paul Cronin leads the team of STR members in writing and approving these documents. This year, the STR collaborated on three intersociety documents: Collection and Handling of Thoracic Small Biopsy and Cytology Specimens for Ancillary Studies Guideline, Practice Parameter for the Performance of Cardiac Scintigraphy, and Practice Parameter for the Performance of Lung Cancer Screening CT.

Myrna Godoy’s Research Committee reviews submissions and active projects for the STR Seed Grants and for the Travel Grant Awards. This year’s STR Seed Grant was awarded to Stuart Cohen for a Machine Learning Algorithm to Diagnose Pneumonia. Both Florian Fintelman and Leah Lin presented the results of their Seed Grants at the 2020 annual meeting.

The Big Data Committee led by Carol Wu, established an MOU between STR and the RSNA/ACR Common Data Elements committee. STR volunteers provided expertise in the annotation and QA process in collaboration with SIIM and ACR on the 2019 Machine Learning Challenge for Pneumothorax.

The On-line Content Ad hoc committee led by David Naeger will be posting content from the 2020 Bootcamp, as well as both the 2019 and 2020 annual meetings on the website this year, immediately following the two-year non-compete clause expiration included in our 2018 video-recording contract. The content will be organized by topic and by education level (medical student, resident/fellow, practicing radiologist) rather than by date of production, creating a better user experience for the website visitor.
Julianna Czum is a major driver of the Health and Wellness Ad hoc Committee, with support from Cris Meyer, Steven Montner, and Ronald Eisenberg. This very new committee is already making inroads into the radiology culture, as was evident at this year’s annual meeting.

Last, but not least, is the Social Media Ad hoc Committee, led by Chuck Lau. Chuck and his team have been steadily increasing the presence of STR on social media, specifically, Twitter (@thoracicrad). On Monday, March 9 of this year, the site had 781 followers. On March 10, the STR posted on Twitter a Position Statement on the use of Chest CT in the diagnosis of COVID-19, and a link to Jeff Kanne’s and Michael Chung’s COVID-19 lectures on our website. Ten days later, the site had 972 followers. This is clearly a platform on which we can create a line of communication for STR and its followers, covering a wide range of topics including emerging public health issues, links to educational content on the website, as well as embedded cases, job postings, etc. If you have not yet joined Twitter, you will be happy to find that @thoracicrad will connect you with an active community of cardiothoracic imagers. If you are on Twitter, please follow us!

As you can see, the STR is making great strides, thanks to a large number of dedicated, hard-working individuals who donate their time and talent. As the 40th anniversary of STR approaches (in 2022), I think that the founders of STR would be very proud to see where STR is today.

Caroline Chiles MD
President, STR
cchiles@wakehealth.edu
Dear STR Member:

The novel 2019 coronavirus infection shaped our annual meeting this year on many levels. Yet, we as a Society have been able to adapt, evolve, and to share information in these times with the ultimate goal of improving the care of patients. This is a reflection of the strength of our society, its members, and supporters. Specifically, we addressed the need to learn more about COVID-19 in this rapidly evolving environment. We thank Drs. Jeff Kanne and Michael Chung for, on short notice, preparing presentations on the epidemiology and CT imaging manifestations of the infection. This lecture has been posted on our website for our membership to review in addition to a statement on the use of CT. As of March 30, 2020 the lecture has been viewed 18,098 times and watched for 2,480 hours!

Reflecting on the recent STR 2020 Annual Meeting at Indian Wells, California March 8-11, 2020, I realize that the annual meeting is a time to bring radiologists together to share our excitement for cardiothoracic imaging. The meeting is a place where members of our society and other registrants can share knowledge, encourage and mentor future thoracic radiologists, make new friends and re-connect with old ones.

It was an honor to serve as the program director for the annual meeting. I would like to first thank the executive committee members for all their input. The program was one in which we worked to provide cutting edge information on topics that are new and sometimes controversial. We warmly thank Drs. Thomas Colby from the Mayo Clinic Arizona, Jessica Donington, Chief of the Section of General Thoracic Surgery from the University of Chicago, and Edward Garon, Director of the thoracic oncology program of UCLA, for outstanding presentations delivered as the Gamsu, Scanlon and Felson lectures respectively (see...
meeting Wrap up). We were also grateful to have witnessed a special moment when Dr. Jeffrey Klein receive the Lifetime Achievement Award for his dedication and enormous contributions to the STR.

This year’s meeting included many innovations, some planned, others necessitated to respond to the rapidly changing environment of the first week of March 2020. As planned, we introduced small group sessions to provide focused instruction in the topics of lung biopsy and cardiac CT protocols. The STR Annual Meeting also incorporated health and wellness into our curriculum with Dr. Stephen Swensen, a past-president of the STR lecturing “Co-Creating Ideal Radiology Work: Six Actions to Flourish.” This inspiring lecture was a great addition. This year was the kick-off of our STR Health and Wellness committee headed by Dr. Julianna Czum, and we thank the committee for suggesting we invite Dr. Swensen. In addition to his lecture, Dr. Swensen also moderated the small group session focusing on physician burnout at which STR Health and Wellness Survey results were presented.

Another enhancement of meeting content included expansion of SAMs sessions to better satisfy the needs of our members for SAMS credits. Despite numerous schedule changes, we were able to maintain 5 of the 6 SAMs sessions intact. This year also introduced an STR-tailored audience response system in both the bootcamp and the annual meeting. Newly drafted guidelines for moderators were instituted to minimize bias by standardizing speaker introductions. Critical for STR’s future, the meeting reintroduced an educational afternoon session specifically for junior faculty and trainees followed by our junior faculty and trainee reception. The Annual Meeting also incorporated state-of-the-art information about emerging diseases other than COVID-19, such as e-cigarette associated lung injury.

Special thanks to Dr. Jeff Kanne and his education committee members in planning the educational content and reviewing SAMs content.

Additionally, we acknowledge the tremendous efforts of Dr. Joseph Schoepf and the Corporate Relations Committee, Dr. Thomas Hartman for his role in the Junior faculty reception and session, Dr. Cris Meyer for his assistance to the Health and Wellness Committee in regards to the annual
meeting and many aspects, Dr. Geoff Rubin for his contributions to the well-received conundrums session, Dr. Saurabh Agarwal and his committee for selection of abstracts and awardees, Dr. Myrna Godoy and the research committee for selection of 5 trainee travel prizes, Dr. Carol Wu for all her efforts devoted to artificial intelligence at the annual meeting and outreach to the Asian Society of Thoracic Radiology, Dr. Loren Ketai and Matt Ketai for their Indian Wells restaurant guide, Drs. Fereidoun Abtin and Kristopher Cummings for their efforts in the small group sessions, and Dr. Ralph Drosten for organizing golf networking activities.

Our program was revised daily to accommodate live and recorded lectures, with impressive sound and video quality and seamless transition between on-site and remote speakers. Due to travel bans, I and many registrants were unable to attend. I have great gratitude for the executive committee officers Drs. Caroline Chiles, Cris Meyer, and Loren Ketai who were on site. The STR is very grateful to Veritas for successfully bringing live streaming to the meeting on extremely short notice, allowing attendees to view from near and far. Also, we thank the speakers who were able to come together and submit recordings on short notice, which was truly an heroic accomplishment! Thank you to so many who have reached out with positive feedback on the quality of the program in terms of presentations on site and recorded.

In this issue, please refer to the award winners for the Best Junior Faculty Oral Scientific Presentation, Best Resident Oral Scientific Presentation, Jack Westcott Award for excellence in presentation by a medical student and 5 cum laude and 5 certificate of merit poster awards. At the meeting we also announced our STR Seed Grant Awardee, Dr. Stuart Cohen of Northwell Health, his project "A Machine Learning Algorithm to Diagnose Pneumonia Requiring Antimicrobial Therapy Based on Clinical and Imaging Data" (See Meeting Wrap up Awards below). I congratulate all these awardees! I was able to join our STR Annual Business Meeting by FaceTime, exemplifying our modern era, so that I could see the presentation of the gift of

Golf at Indian Wells

Stuart Cohen, MD

Changing of the Guard - Drs. Munden, Chiles, and Ko (via Facetime)
appreciation for our outgoing, President Caroline Chiles.

For the upcoming year, the STR will continue our educational mission by expanding the online content on our STR website. We have already heard from many of you about the benefits of posting both the COVID-19 lecture recording and our STR/ASER (American Society of Emergency Radiology) position statement on the role of CT in that infection. A new ad hoc committee headed by Dr. David Naeger will be in charge of our online content and working in conjunction with the electronic media committee to curate our educational content. Our aim is to increase the engagement of trainees and junior faculty through our online presence and our Mentorship, Fellowship, Education, Electronic Media, Social Media and other committees. The Resident Bootcamp’s Program, this year directed at on-call preparation, is a key element in increasing trainee involvement in the STR. The STR, as a whole, owes much to Course Directors, Drs. Caroline Chiles and David Naeger.

We thank Dr. Chuck Lau and the ad hoc social media committee for keeping us all up to date on the annual meeting on Twitter with hashtag #thoracicrad2020 and our STR Twitter account @thoracicrad. In acknowledgment for all his efforts, Dr. Lau received the STR 2020 Presidential Award. In addition to reaching a wider audience through social media, we will strive to increase our international ties by sharing information and expertise thoracic radiology societies outside the US. This will be facilitated by our new ad hoc translation committee led by Dr. Santiago Rossi. We sincerely thank Executive Director, Sue O’Sullivan and the Veritas team for all their contributions throughout the meeting planning process. Also, thank you to our annual meeting attendees, including those via live streaming, for your feedback and meeting survey comments. We especially look forward to welcoming you all to our STR Workshop and Annual Business Meeting in March 2021 in Las Vegas and the World Congress of Thoracic Imaging in June 2021 in Rome.

In conclusion, these past few weeks have been very memorable, and at the time I am writing this, I cannot foresee what the future will bring. One aspect is sure, that I am honored to be the President of the STR and to be able to serve with such outstanding officers as we continue our mission to provide education, expertise, collaboration, and mentoring in cardiopulmonary imaging and form even stronger ties between the STR and other societies. Most importantly, I wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

Jane P. Ko, MD
The Society of Thoracic Radiology meeting for 2020 took place from March 6-11, the cusp of the outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States. Although much has changed over the ensuing weeks, the STR 2020 meeting stands as an remarkable educational experience and we wish to thank all those who attended and those who contributed either in person or from afar.

For the second year Caroline Chiles MD and David Naeger MD assembled an outstanding STR Thoracic Radiology Bootcamp for trainees. The Bootcamp maximized interaction with trainees by using both audience response system and a case base format. Topics included the acutely ill patient, the patient with history of an MVA and the patient with chest pain. Although total number of attendees was suppressed by COVID-19 turmoil, 38 trainees attended, including young radiologists from as far away as Poland.

The main STR Annual meeting began on Sunday. Faculty who suddenly found themselves unable to travel collectively rolled up their sleeves to record the lectures, and succeeded in sending outstanding presentations to Indian Wells. Ultimately a total of 57 presentations were given live and 38 by high quality recordings. The meetings’ opening session on Cardiopulmonary Vascular imaging featured a mix of superb live and recorded lectures, setting the tone for the remainder of the conference. Later that afternoon Chris Treml, director of the ACR Data Science Institute kicked off a session on quantitative imaging. Chang Min Park, MD, PhD, from the Asian Thoracic Radiology Society (ASTR) was unable to attend and in his absence, Albert Hsiao, MD, PhD discussed the application of Deep Learning to Cardiac MRI. The Sunday session closed with Geoffrey Rubin’s encore performance as MC of the Conundrums, the winning case, a massive intrathoracic lateral meningocele was presented by Mark Parker MD.

Monday began with two concurrent small group breakfast sessions, one focused on Chest Interventions the other on Cardiac MRI. Both
were highly interactive and served as a “trailer” of what to expect at the case-based STR conference planned for 2021 in Las Vegas. The main educational program then moved to interstitial lung disease and culminated with the Gamsu Lecture by Thomas Colby MD on “New Entities, Intersection with Thoracic Radiology, and Review of Transbronchial Cryobiopsy”. This was followed by an “ILD Board” a radiology/pathology case based discussion featuring Drs. Lynch, Klingerman and Colby. The presentation received outstanding attendee evaluations.

After a short break, the curriculum focused on the growing importance of physician wellness. Steve Swensen, MD, MMM, inspired the entire room for 45 minutes with his vision for “Co-Creating Ideal Radiology Work: Six Actions to Flourish.” Moments later the room was inspired in a different fashion, by the genuine emotion of Dr. Jeff Klein as he received the STR Lifetime Achievement Award. A brief business lunch followed, which included a unique FaceTime transition of the STR presidency from the Caroline Chiles MD to Jane Ko MD. Edith Marom MD was selected as the new STR Treasurer and Charles Lau MD received the much deserved President’s award for his creation of STR’s social media presence. Attendees subsequently dispersed to a variety of networking events, or just relaxed in the beautiful Monday afternoon weather.

Tuesday morning began with a small group breakfast discussion of the implementation of physician well-being programs, chair by Steve Swensen MD. This led into the main meeting curriculum which began with Trauma and ended with the conference’s marquee event, the discussion of COVID-19 infection by Drs. Kanne and Chung. The entirety of this session of COVID-19 presentations remains freely available on the STR website.

After a short break the curriculum resumed with the Scanlon lecture by Jessica Donington, MD, “Updates on Surgical Treatment for Stage I Lung Cancer.” The presentation was tour de force of the current surgical approach to lung cancer, which among other innovations, laid out evolving approaches to decreasing surgical morbidity.

This was followed by Edward Garon, MD’s Felson Lecture bringing STR
members up to date on the latest aspects of lung cancer immunotherapy. Following sessions on cardiac imaging essentials and quality improvement, the didactic lectures gave way to the scientific sessions. Because of the scheduling and attendance challenges mandated by travel bans, oral presentations were consolidated into a single Tuesday afternoon session. Despite being constrained from attending in person, Saurabh Agarwal, MD and the awards committee remained deeply committed to the meetings scientific content, and were able to view and jury the presentation via live streaming. Tuesday’s session concluded with expert advice to young faculty from Drs. Bhalla and Klein on how to successfully submit educational exhibits and publications. Appropriately, these lectures were followed by a reception for trainees and young faculty where networking for STR’s future could be seen.

Wednesday began with both cases of the day and a sigh, as a momentous meeting was drawing to a close. Following an excellent SAM session on structural heart disease and coronary arteries, Cris Meyer MD presented the STR meeting awards (see below). The morning ended appropriately with a session entitled “from the basics to the new.” The meeting itself concluded with an innovative session entitled “Lunch and Learn,” in which series of superb recorded talks were played while attendees enjoyed a fine meal prepared by the Hyatt.

Respectfully,

Loren Ketai
Congratulations to STR 2020 Oral Presentation Award Winners!

**Junior Faculty Presentation:** Alex Bratt, MD  
Left Atrial Volume as a Biomarker of Atrial Fibrillation on Routine Chest CT: A Deep Learning Approach

**Best Resident Oral Presentation:** Zaid Haddadin, MD  
Second-Opinion Subspecialty Consultations in Chest Radiology

**Jack Westcott Award (Best Trainee Presentation and $1000 Prize):** Minimal Aortic Injury Detected on CT Angiography During Initial Trauma Imaging: A Single Academic Level 1 Trauma Center’s Experience  
Christopher Ovanez, MD MPH

Congratulations to STR 2020 Poster Award Winners!

**Cum Laude**  
Amanda Romesberg, DO -- Cardiovascular Implantable Electronic Devices: A Contemporary Review  
Camille Dumas, DO -- “ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT” Don’t let the right heart leave you dazed and confused.  
Shravan Sridhar, MD -- Thoracic manifestations of gastrointestinal diseases, syndromes, and interventions  
Lea Azour, MD -- Percutaneous Lung Biopsy: Strategies through the Strike-Outs  
Varun Mehta, MD -- Disease of the Drain: Radiologic and Pathologic Findings of Pulmonary Lymphatic Disease

**Certificate of Merit**  
Rahul Bonga, BA -- Clearing the Congestion: Role of pro-BNP and Chest Radiography in Heart Failure  
Haneen Marji, MD -- Multimodality Imaging of Benign and Malignant Cardiac Tumors  
Arlene Sirajuddin, MD -- Ischemic heart disease: a comparative review of
noninvasive imaging techniques and their findings

Antoine Azar, MD -- Don’t Just “Chalk” It Up To Granulomatous Disease: Expanding On The Differential Diagnosis For High-Attenuation Foci In Diffuse Lung Disease

Joseph Mansour, MD -- Revisiting the Imaging Findings of Septic Pulmonary Embolism

Congratulations to STR 2020 Research Committee Award Winner!

The STR announces the funding of $20,000 to Dr. Stuart Cohen and colleagues at the Feinstein Institutes of Medical Research at Northwell Health for the proposal: “A Machine Learning Algorithm to Diagnose Pneumonia Requiring Antimicrobial Therapy Based on Clinical and Imaging Data.” Dr. Cohen is currently an Assistant Professor of Radiology in Imaging Clinical Effectiveness and Outcomes Research at Donald and Barbara Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell and an Assistant Professor in the Center for Health Innovations and Outcomes Research at the Feinstein Institutes of Medical Research at Northwell Health.

After graduating from New York University School of Medicine in 2008, Dr. Cohen completed an internship in internal medicine at Saint Vincent’s Hospital and Medical Center in 2009, a residency in Diagnostic Radiology at The Mount Sinai Medical Center, Mount Sinai School of Medicine in 2013, a fellowship in Musculoskeletal Radiology at the Hospital for Special Surgery, Weill Cornell Medical College in 2014, and a fellowship in Cardiothoracic Radiology at the Montefiore Medical Center, Albert Einstein College of Medicine in 2015.

The proposed research project will use machine learning to diagnose pneumonia in the hospital setting based on both imaging and clinical data. This algorithm intends to help diagnose all presentations of pneumonia, including atypical presentations, and to improve time to diagnosis, potentially decreasing morbidity and mortality.

The STR seed grant process is aimed at offering seed grant support for young investigators to pursue novel research in cardiothoracic imaging and related fields. For more information, please refer to the STR research webpage.
STR Members Enjoy Being Together
When Loren Ketai asked me to commit to paper my impressions of the events surrounding the STR 2020 Annual Meeting, my first reaction was a bit of PAMSD – Post Annual Meeting Stress Disorder. After the stress of the Austin meeting in 2018, I confess that I was really looking forward to the past-President glide into obscurity. Instead, because of early travel bans, I was one of the 3 STR officers on the ground in Palm Springs. What was supposed to be a Strategic Planning session to refresh the STR 5-year Plan quickly turned into a disaster relief command center. We had 48 hours to figure out if the annual meeting was even possible. The week to come was an ever-morphing program based on cancelling speaker updates, an expanding library of outstanding recorded talks, and available on-site member “extra” talks with less than 24 hours notice. It was creating CME questions in real time for our newly created livestream audience. I felt like I was living in Simon Sinek’s three books - Start with Why, Leaders Eat Last and The Infinite Game.

In the first book, Start with Why, Mr. Sinek describes the importance of knowing “why” your organization exists. In my opinion, the STR’s Why is to educate medical professionals all over the globe on the constantly advancing field of thoracic imaging. This means every level of medicine – medical students, allied health professionals, residents, fellows, general radiologists and specialists. It also means raising awareness of new diseases - vaping, artificial stone or COVID-19. Finally it means adapting; our educational format is evolving – didactic lectures, livestreaming, online content, email, Facebook, Twitter. The Annual Meeting has been core to that educational mission; the Executive Committee did not take the decision to hold this meeting lightly. Based on the limited information available early in this pandemic, we acted in the best interest of the STR and its membership while at the same time making alternative arrangements for those who could not attend. When we asked on-site lecturers to bring a few extra talks, the flood gates opened and everyone stepped up! Our off-site members were equally impressive – the speed of submission and the quality of the recorded talks was nothing short of miraculous. Our members clearly understand our Why – leading in thoracic imaging education.
In the second book, Leaders Eat Last, Simon describes the qualities of people and organizations that make good leaders and teams that pull together. Caroline Chiles as STR President and Sue O’Sullivan, Veritas CEO did an amazing job rallying their teams to get the job done. The on-site Executive Committee (Caroline, Loren and me) and the Veritas staff (Sue O’Sullivan, Gina Baxter and Patrick Kelly) were in jump seats in the last two rows of the lecture hall near the AV guys. Great friendships are often forged in the fire of adversity. It seemed like one of us was always jumping up to put out the next fire. My greatest joy was when attendees came up to tell us how smoothly everything was going! Sometimes it was hard for us to see from the other side of the curtain engulfed in controlled chaos. One of our AV guys who shall go nameless (for HIPAA compliance) was literally passing a kidney stone and puking in the back of the room while seamlessly transitioning between live talks, audience response and livestreaming! I cannot wait to watch this meeting when it is posted online because I didn’t see much of it the first time. The glimpses of the talks I saw were uniformly superb.

In Sinek’s most recent book, The Infinite Game, he describes the importance of any organization knowing the type of game it’s playing. In a finite game, there are rules, a score, time limits and a winner – think football. In an infinite game, the goal is to stay in the game as long as possible. I believe that the STR is in the infinite game of thoracic imaging education/discovery and our goal as a society is to stay in it as long as possible. The Palm Springs Annual Meeting, like Austin and Hilton Head will be the stuff of legends. Once again, thanks to the entire STR/Veritas team – you kept us in the game!

Caroline Chiles, STR President

A spike in COVID-19 cases in the US began the last week of February, and hospitals in New York, Boston and Seattle felt the impact first. On Monday, March 2, Jane Ko, STR 2020 Program Director, and Sue O’Sullivan of Veritas Meeting Management telephoned to let me know a major academic institution had implemented a travel ban for all staff. They expected that other hospitals would quickly follow suit. Jane could not attend the meeting she had spent a year organizing.
On Tuesday we surveyed all speakers on the program - 50% planned to attend. Cancelling the meeting would require personally contacting all meeting registrants, since email correspondence can be blocked by firewalls. Some registrants were already en route. For every e-mail we received urging us to cancel the meeting, we received another one urging us to hold the meeting. The Executive Committee voted (not unanimously) to proceed as scheduled, even if it meant that only a skeleton crew was on-site organizing content submitted remotely.

That skeleton crew was myself, Cris Meyer and Loren Ketai, and the Veritas team. On Friday, we began revising the Bootcamp and Annual Meeting programs, identifying replacement speakers and recorded lectures. The schedule could not be finalized more than a day in advance as travel plans changed continuously. Meanwhile, Jane Ko and Sanjeev Bhalla worked remotely, contacting every speaker to confirm attendance or provide recording instructions. Debbie Roller (Veritas) produced spreadsheets with speaker names color-coded: green (on-site), blue (recorded lecture received) or red (not attending, no recorded talk received). Some days looked completely red. At times it looked very bleak.

But somehow amidst this chaos, the meeting happened. With amazing rapidity speakers submitted not just one talk, but an extra recorded talk in case we needed to fill an empty slot. The Dropbox for recorded presentations began to bulge. On-site speakers gave not only the talk they had been scheduled to give, but also other topics as needed. The audience was full.

And then Steve Swensen, former STR President and this year’s invited speaker, gave a truly inspiring talk about engagement and social connectedness, reminding me why we are part of STR and why we attend the annual meeting. In STR we find esprit de corps. We bond together, we care about each other, and we work for a common goal. I will always remember 2020 as the year that STR truly came together, if perhaps remotely, to make something special happen.
Jane Ko, Program Chair and Incoming President

First of all, I would like wish you all the best in these times. This year’s annual meeting was unusual. Though planning began two years ago, COVID-19 resulted in me watching the meeting from New York with preparations underway for the virus. Regardless, I felt as if I was there seeing moderators and part of the audience, and while I couldn’t directly communicate, I learned a great deal and could feel the interest in the room. I have heard such great feedback about the virtual streaming. Out of the meeting came our lecture on COVID-19 and our position statement, knowledge for us to combat this disease. Thank you to all the lecturers and attendees from near and far and those who have shared photos of the meeting.

Loren Ketai, Secretary

The phrase “meet with triumph and disaster and treat both imposters just the same” means something different to each of us. It may mean that events like this year’s STR meeting are not wholly one or the other. Successes? The presentations were of course outstanding, including the recorded talks whose technical quality and outstanding content were indistinguishable from live presentations (“That’s a great talk! Wait, ..I didn’t think Johnny Vlahos could make it…oh yeah, he’s not actually standing at the podium). Several presentations pegged the upper limits of my own “I-didn’t-know-that-O-meter.” Looking forward, we have an outstanding trove of educational lectures to offer to the radiology community this spring.

And the people. Our family at Veritas were incredibly gracious under duress and being around gracious people somehow brings out the graciousness in all of us. (Sort of the opposite effect of coming up behind someone blocking an airport moving walkway).

Failures? We had hoped to get so much more done. Plans for expanding our outreach to residents, moving the newsletter towards social media, advancing a speakers bureau. Nope. Not happening in that moment. We had to accept that. More important, the fates kept us from catching up with
many of you outside the digital world. Not by text, not by twitter, not by email, but with feet up on the patio railing. For that we will need to look towards STR in Las Vegas. Can’t wait.

Sanjeev Bhalla, Treasurer

I was so looking forward to this year’s STR meeting in Indian Wells. For the past year, I had been involved with weekly conference calls and multiple emails with the course director, Jane Ko, and the other members of the STR Executive Committee. I knew from my sneak preview that this meeting would continue to build on the successes of many past meetings and promised to be spectacular. I also knew that working with Veritas promised to bring a thoughtful and technically advanced program. But all of a sudden, months of deliberate planning turned into days of massive change requiring us to go into warp drive. In the days leading up to the meeting it became clear that many of us would not be physically present at the annual meeting. The Thursday before the meeting we began testing easy ways of self-recording talks and through a series of electronic exchanges, put together a plan.

We expected a few recorded talks to be submitted, knowing that those “grounded” STR members were staying back because of patient care or COVID-19 planning and were busier than normal. What we received was simply overwhelming, dozens of high-quality recordings. Watching from St. Louis, I found it hard to tell who was onsite speaking and who had been recorded. Although I missed the personal interactions that have come to define the STR, I leave this year’s meeting amazed at the amount of innovation that took place in a week and the level of dedication of our members to their patients, their colleagues and to the STR. Everyone has an extraordinary tale which I look forward to hearing next year in Las Vegas.

Sue O’Sullivan, Executive Director

The famous quote from Winston Churchill, “We are all in this together,” during WWII – which has now become the mantra for the COVID-19 pandemic – is truly how I will long remember the STR 2020 Annual Meeting.

It was only days before the STR full day strategic planning meeting was to take place when we received the notification that academic institutions would begin issuing travel bans. This would not only affect our President-
Elect and Program Chair, but many speakers and moderators. The unknown of what was next to come was overwhelming. We held an emergency Executive Committee call, discussed all possible options, and we were immediately assigned to our various research gathering tasks, such as determining how many individuals still planned on attending. Faculty were assigned to contact numerous speakers and moderators to see who would be able to present in Indian Wells and begin revising the program accordingly. We met and met and met as information continued to change in what seemed to be by the hour.

As a group, we voted to move forward with the meeting and to livestream the full conference to everyone that was registered. Additionally, we needed to provide CME for those who attended remotely. That meant the Executive Committee members would need to review every presentation so they could develop CME test questions. The strategic planning meeting became the program planning meeting. The program would be a hybrid of live presentations and recorded videos. I felt extreme hidden pressure about the livestreaming and CME through VeritasTV. Although I knew we could do this, it was the first time that we were ever using our team to livestream a full course, including recorded videos with CME, and it had to work! We were counting on our technology. As the meeting began and the magnitude of the task was clear, I looked around at my Veritas team. We were all anxious about the unknown and relying on each other a bit more than usual.

During the last day of the meeting, the adrenalin kicked in once again for our team as we received tremendous positive feedback from so many that attended in person and remotely. Members were thankful for how seamless the course was run and how flawlessly the videos and livestreaming worked. We were feeling proud that with help of on-site faculty and the incredible mobilization of faculty from afar, we were able to provide an outstanding
educational experience to so many participants in Indian Wells and around the world. We were feeling proud that the leadership and management team worked so closely to pull this off, and most of all, we knew “We were all in this together.”
Society of Thoracic Radiology
601 E. Main St. Suite 300
East Dundee, IL 60118

Telephone
847.752.5355

E-mail
str@thoracicrad.org

Website
www.thoracicrad.org

STR Officers:
Jane P. Ko, MD
President
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Andrew Yen, MD

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