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## Letters ...

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## What's next?



This is the time every year that we pause, take a breath, and think about the possibilities that lie ahead. Yet, this year is far different from years past and we can't help but reflect on how different everything is. Many of us have been operating in an "alternative" universe, one punctuated by uncertainty, disruption, and anxiety as a result of COVID-19. Stay-at-home orders, social distancing, to mask or not to mask, e-school, Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting, missed connections, and so on are daily reminders of a new work-life balance in which the lines continue to blur and one day fades into the next — with no real end in sight. As we head into winter, the predictions indicating there would be an uptick in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are unfortunately holding true.

But there are some bright spots ahead as we see positive news coming out from the front-runners in the race to get vaccines and treatments to market. And although a distribution strategy for said vaccines and treatments is weeks from being officially unveiled, again there is growing optimism that better days are ahead.

In preparation for our annual Year in Preview issue, we took stock of what's on the horizon for the industry based on numerous conversations, and the overwhelming consensus was that the coronavirus will continue to dominate business operations well into next year.

Scientists are learning how to treat the disease more effectively at the same time they are also learning more about the long-term health effects even for those who were lucky enough to contract only mild symptoms.

This real-world evidence (RWE) and real-world data (RWD) will prove to be critical in the coming months and years, which is why we noted this as one of the trends to watch. In fact, Ramita Tandon, chief operating officer, Trio Health, says it has become clear that RWE is the powerful disruptor turning the healthcare industry upside down just as Tesla did for the automotive industry.

Our community of experts also identified decentralized clinical trials as a topic that remains hot as the industry continues to pivot and adapt to greater virtuality. COVID-19 also has shone a brighter light on the need for greater democratization of trials to encompass more diversity and demographic representation. Greg Licholai, M.D., chief medical information officer of PRA Health Sciences, holds nothing back when he says: "Diversity in clinical trials is a moral imperative and necessary for better medications."

Diversity, equity, and inclusion is another hot topic that companies are grappling with as they look to ensure their workforces are as representative as the patients they serve.

These are just a few of the trends we are tracking in this special issue. We look forward to better days ahead and wish all of you a healthy and happy 2021.

Taren Grom  
Editor

## Their word...

### ROBIN ROBINSON

Senior Editor



*2020 has been a year of extremes for the industry, and looking toward the future shows both opportunities and challenges ahead.*

### KIM RIBBINK

Senior Editor



*More and more companies are implementing policies around diversity and inclusion as they recognize both the moral and commercial importance of a progressive workplace.*

### CAROLYN GRETTON

Features Editor



*Awareness continues to grow about the lack of diversity in clinical trials, and pharma is taking action. Companies are putting procedures in place to ensure clinical trials fairly represent people of all races, ethnicities, genders, and ages.*

## Coming in JANUARY

- ▶ The Innovator's Journey
- ▶ Print Advertising — Alive and Well
- ▶ Galien Foundation Winners
- ▶ Commanders & Chiefs — Biopharma CEOs
- ▶ Digital Influencers
- ▶ Showcases: High-Science Brands Virtual Health