

## **Vice-President Nomination Statement – Professor Francesco Del Galdo, MD, PhD**

In the last decade, thanks to major international collaborations, a significant progress has been made in the approach to trial design and patient treatment. I believe that this momentum will grow proportionally to the engagement of our community to foster initiatives in validating targets, defining endpoints, and weighing the importance of each manifestation in how our patients feel, function, and survive.

SCTC has been growing commendably in gathering world experts and international collaborations on currently “unmet” needs in Scleroderma clinical trial research. Thanks to the work of the previous boards (president(s), secretary and working groups), SCTC is now stronger in fulfilling its remit and gathering international collaborations to improve clinical outcomes of patients with Scleroderma. The recent white paper effort is a notable proof of this position, and will be a milestone in shaping the research of next decade as well as in giving a new framework for industry collaborations.

The recent success in FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and EMA (European Medicines Agency) registration trials has sparked a domino of interests that are boosting Scleroderma progressively higher in industry agenda. This is the time, more than ever before, when the scleroderma community holds both the privilege and the responsibility to define and inform the right therapeutic targets and prioritise the clinical needs to be addressed. During the last 20 years of medical research and clinical activity in Italy, US, and UK, I have gained an awareness of how different health and research systems work and how crucial is to understand the differences and strengths of each environment to build solid synergies. I intend to build on this experience and strengthen the international network of SCTC collaborations.

If elected as vice-president I will support SCTC in harnessing the tremendous opportunity of these times by:

- Fostering industry collaboration on cross-centre target validation approaches. Strength is in the numbers and in the accuracy of the information gathered. SCTC working groups have shown a remarkable success in defining frameworks for the right research questions to be addressed. Through SCTC collaboration we can as a group identify biomarker driven target population enrichments to focus the right intervention to the right patient.

- Increase the research power of Scleroderma research community, by collaborating with other international networks and support the implementation of research fellowships. Advancing knowledge should see no competition; and dedicating time to Scleroderma research is the key for our future as a community. This time of increased industry engagement is crucial to come together independently of networks or affiliations and invest in future bright minds in Scleroderma research. SCTC holds a privileged position to make this happen.

- increase the reach in under-represented geographical areas. A further advantage of global industry engagement is their global market reach. Through SCTC engagement I will support the implementation of scholarship and mentorship programs in geographically under-represented areas in Scleroderma research, to equalise the knowledge and research power across the continents. A SCTC with a global reach will be able to build on complementary strengths and maximise the chance we have to progress future knowledge.