

MEDIA RELEASE

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CTTI Names Sally Okun as New Executive Director

Seasoned leader in patient-public involvement in research, care, and policy will lead public-private partnership, oversee execution of Transforming Trials 2030 vision

Durham, N.C.—October 11, 2021—The [Clinical Trials Transformation Initiative](#) (CTTI), a public-private partnership co-founded by Duke University and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), today announced Sally Okun as its new executive director.

“Sally’s wealth of experience, distinct perspective, and passion for driving change uniquely position her as the ideal leader for CTTI at this particular time,” said Mark McClellan, chair of CTTI’s executive committee and director of the Duke-Margolis Center for Health Policy. “Throughout her career, she has brought the patient voice to many audiences in the public and private sectors in the U.S. and globally, and also emphasized the critical importance of evidence generation in clinical research – principles that strongly align with the fabric of CTTI and where we are headed with our [Transforming Trials 2030 vision](#).”

Okun most recently served as the Vice President for Policy & Ethics at PatientsLikeMe where, among many efforts, she supported the development of the company’s emerging social contract for the conduct of biomedical and multi-omics research through its initiative DigitalMe™ and led a newly established Ethics and Compliance Advisory Board comprised of external members representing patients, consumers, law, ethics, and cybersecurity. Prior to PatientsLikeMe, Okun, a registered nurse, practiced as a palliative and end-of-life care specialist for nearly three decades and contributed to multiple clinical, research, and educational projects in that specialty area.

“Now, more than ever, is the time to challenge our thinking, test our assumptions, and push the boundaries in the clinical trials space – all with the goal of making significant advancements and improvements in research to benefit patients,” said Okun. “I am honored and excited to lead CTTI during this time of its ambitious Transforming Trials 2030 vision, which focuses on shaping the future of clinical trials from the patient perspective – that, I believe, is where real transformation must begin.”

Announced earlier this year, Transforming Trials 2030 is CTTI’s bold vision that clinical trials by 2030 be: 1) patient-centered and easily accessible, 2) fully integrated into health processes, 3) designed with a quality approach, 4) maximally leverage available data, and 5) improve population health.

“I am most excited about the impact that CTTI can have when it achieves the first vision of Transforming Trials 2030 – to make clinical trials patient-centric and easily accessible,” said Okun. “We can only accomplish this vision if we are on the journey together with patients.” “Sally’s fresh perspective and passion for driving change will be invaluable for CTTI,” said

John Alexander, Duke co-chair of CTTI and a senior faculty member at the Duke Clinical Research Institute. “She will bring a lot of innovative ideas and new focus to the initiative as we think about transforming trials and we get from where we are today, to where we want to be in 2030.”

“Sally is a well-respected thought leader across research, care, and policy. She will bring an important and comprehensive perspective to CTTI” added Khair ElZarrad, FDA co-chair of CTTI and acting director of the Office of Medical Policy (OMP) at FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER). “She is well-suited to lead CTTI during this time of ambitious and critical work to transform clinical trials in a rapidly changing ecosystem.”

In her new role as CTTI executive director, Okun will work closely with the [executive committee](#), [steering committee](#), and [staff](#) to develop and implement strategies to accomplish CTTI’s mission and Transforming Trials 2030 vision. She will also orchestrate efforts to effectively engage all interested stakeholders to improve the conduct of clinical trials.

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About the Clinical Trials Transformation Initiative (CTTI)

The Clinical Trials Transformation Initiative (CTTI), a public-private partnership co-founded by Duke University and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, seeks to develop and drive adoption of practices that will increase the quality and efficiency of clinical trials. Bringing together organizations and individuals from across the enterprise—representing academia, clinical investigators, government and regulatory agencies, industry, institutional review boards, patient advocacy groups, and other groups—CTTI is transforming the clinical trials landscape by developing evidence-based solutions to clinical research challenges. Many regulatory agencies and organizations have applied CTTI’s more than 30 existing recommendations, and associated resources, to make better clinical trials a reality. Learn more about CTTI projects, recommendations, and resources at www.ctti-clinicaltrials.org.