Poster 44

Trends in the Evolving Virtual Congress Era: Considerations for Presentation Development

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked a rapid shift in medical congresses from an in-person to a virtual setting.

Rapid adoption of virtual platforms required optimization of the agency-pharmaceutical company process for developing presentations and ancillary materials, often on accelerated timelines, and often requiring last-minute changes in format.

The new virtual setting also demanded the development of different approaches for effective presentation; data dissemination; and attendee interactions, educational engagements, and face-to-face discussions.

Considering these shifts during (compared with prior to) the pandemic, we sought to identify key factors and process refinements that should be considered by agency-pharmaceutical company partners when developing medical congress presentations.

Methods

Four major oncology/hematology congresses **(ASCO, EHA, ESMO, ASH)** were included in the descriptive analysis.

Key dates (2019-2021) were selected for analysis and included those project milestones in the pharmaceutical industry-sponsored clinical research environment that typically trigger development and delivery of the congress publications.

- Dates were evaluated to generate the number of weeks from abstract disposition notification to congress presentation upload/delivery date.

Results were compiled and assessed for median weeks observed from congress disposition to presentation upload/delivery, before and during the pandemic.

Based on these findings and on real-world experience, we summarized key learnings, considerations, and implications for the development of industry-sponsored research congress publications.

Results

Analyses based on data from ASCO, EHA, ESMO, and ASH between 2019 and 2021 (**Figure 1**).

- For presentations at these congresses in 2019, the median development time for poster/oral (from disposition notification to in-person presentation) was 8 weeks (range, 6.3-10.0)
- For presentations at these congresses in 2020-2021, the median time for development was reduced to 6 weeks (range, 5.1-6.3)

Figure 1. Median development times from 4 major congresses (2019-2021).

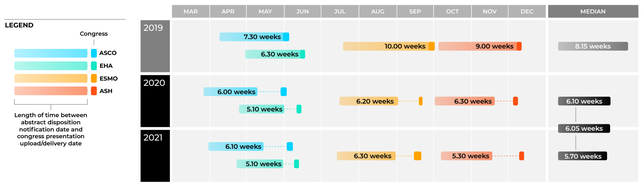
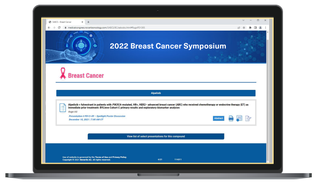


Figure 2. Examples of supplementary content and enhancements

Visual, digital/HTML posters

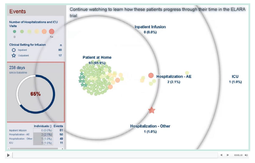
Techniques such as polling and making content accessible via QR codes linked to sponsor-hosted hubs/microsites



Polling

Dynamic data visualization

Inclusion of dynamic data visualization video as part of QR code content



Discussion/spotlight sessions required additional slides/recording

Author panel discussion recording as part of supplementary QR code content

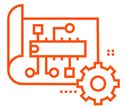
Approaches to Accommodate Shorter Timelines

COMMUNICATION

Clear, proactive, and streamlined communications with authors regarding content development and sharing expedited timelines

PLATFORMS

Where possible, simultaneous author reviews were leveraged on shared platforms while maintaining good publication practices



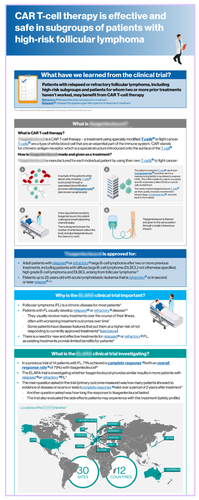
PROCESS

Early planning for proposed content/layout development (eg, before abstract dispositions)

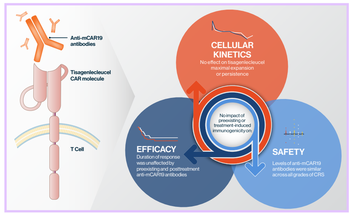
Expedited agency-pharmaceutical company turnarounds and balanced author review times

Additional materials for non-expert readers

Plain language summaries



Infographics



Speaker videos

Discussion and Recommendations

In adapting to the changing times with the pandemic, the shift from fully in-person events to virtual/hybrid events called for consideration of several factors such as condensed timelines and improved engagement tactics.

- Preparing for potential in-person attendance in addition to considerations for upload deadlines set by the congress
- Regardless of congress format, presentation enhancements can help improve the viewer experience, with further potential for reader engagement, insights, and information retention if interactive poster elements are incorporated[1]

Several key challenges should therefore be considered by agency-pharmaceutical company partners when planning for presentations in hybrid format

CHALLENGE: Compressed Timelines ▸ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Readiness to pivot based on the evolving situation and presentation needs
- Plan ahead and account for presentation enhancement timelines
  - What can be developed in advance?
  - Plain language summaries/infographics may require different/additional review steps
  - Preparation of speakers for live Q&A sessions
- Begin outline/shell development at least of background/methodology sections prior to congress disposition
- Statistical team should run author-requested analyses prior to abstract dispositions to have the validated data available at time of notification; need clear communication with statistical team regarding deadlines
- Align on figures/tables to be included in advance and, if appropriate, redraw/format all figures in advance
- Increased follow-ups and reminders to review
  - Including summary of changes from the previous draft for ease of review helps expedite reviews as well
  - Language surrounding potential removal from author byline due to compliance with ICMJE criteria is included in follow-ups
- The ICMJE also provided official guidance for situations where the pandemic impacted author responsiveness in peer-reviewed publications
  - If non-responsive authors meet ICMJE criteria 1 & 2 but not 3 & 4, remainder of authors may elect to proceed with submission to journal or congress with inclusion of disclaimer that affected authors did not fully meet criteria 3 & 4[2]

CHALLENGE: Limitations of Congress Platforms to Include Further Enhancements in Posters and Presentations ▸ RECOMMENDATIONS

- Engage congress teams early to confirm details of platform, tech partners, timelines, and expectations, and check in regularly as details and requirements can change quickly
- Scenario plan for technical hurdles and how to overcome them successfully
- Create or repurpose content appropriate for digital use
- Use adult learning principles, including multimedia
- Visual slides (reduced text), video and audio
  - Plan ahead for briefings, development of speaking points, rehearsals, video production, and approvals
- Use shareable messages
- Leverage the reach, visibility, and engagement of content via social media
- Future thinking: Augmented reality functionality

CHALLENGE: Upload of Corrections ▸ RECOMMENDATIONS

- If the congress does not allow corrections after digital poster submission, consider adding a disclaimer to the corrected poster
- Congresses should consider refining their deadlines and providing timely communications regarding guidelines/specifications and platforms to accommodate reasonable presentation development timeframes
  - Shortened timelines potentially led to missed congress upload deadlines

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References

1. Parker NN, et al. Evolution of the Scientific Poster for the Virtual Attendee. American Medical Writers Association Conference, October 27-29, 2021.
2. International Committee of Medical Journal Editors. Recommendations for the Conduct, Reporting, Editing, and Publication of Scholarly Work in Medical Journals. December 2021. https://www.icmje.org/icmje-recommendations.pdf

Conclusions

Following the shift from in-person to virtual medical congresses due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we explored factors and identified refinements to support development of medical congress presentations in this evolving milieu.

These factors can be considered by agency-pharmaceutical company partners when working with authors on medical publications to help optimize the development process and support effective presentation of clinical trial data at virtual, in-person, or hybrid medical congresses.

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