

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on medical congresses



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Objective

- To assess the resources and presentation formats offered by medical/scientific congresses during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic (March–December 2020) as alternatives to traditional, in-person congresses.

Research design and methods

- Information on congresses occurring March–December 2020 were collected from DataVision and respective congress websites.
- Congresses covering the medical areas of neuroscience, oncology, hematology, gastroenterology, immunology and rare metabolic diseases, as well as health economics, outcomes research and pharmacokinetics, were analyzed.
- Congress formats were categorized as cancelled, postponed and virtual.

Results

- Data from 102 congresses were collected.
 - 22 congresses were cancelled, 28 were postponed and 52 were changed to an exclusively virtual format (Table 1).
 - Details of the congresses analyzed by their status are shown in Figure 1.
 - The medical areas of the congresses included in the analysis are shown in Figure 2.
- Eight of the 22 cancelled congresses provided a virtual poster library for viewing (Figure 3).
- Thirteen of the 28 postponed congresses rescheduled the congress to the next calendar year. Twelve of the 28 postponed congresses changed to virtual format, two were undecided and one congress was conducted live.
- Fifty-one of the 52 virtual congresses had virtual scientific programs, including e-posters and oral presentations available for viewing, with 12 congresses offering additional digital enhancements such as interactive posters, voice-over, and video summaries of the posters.
- Eleven congresses had dedicated virtual poster sessions/live chat sessions to present the posters or answer questions from attendees during the virtual congress.

Table 1. Outcomes of congresses included in analysis (N = 102).

| | Neuroscience | Immunology | Gastroenterology | Other ^a | Oncology | Rare metabolic diseases | Hematology | Total |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------|------------------|--------------------|----------|-------------------------|------------|-------|
| Cancelled | 8 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 22 |
| Postponed | 5 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 28 |
| Changed to virtual format | 12 | 11 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 52 |

^aOther category includes health economics, outcomes research and pharmacokinetics.

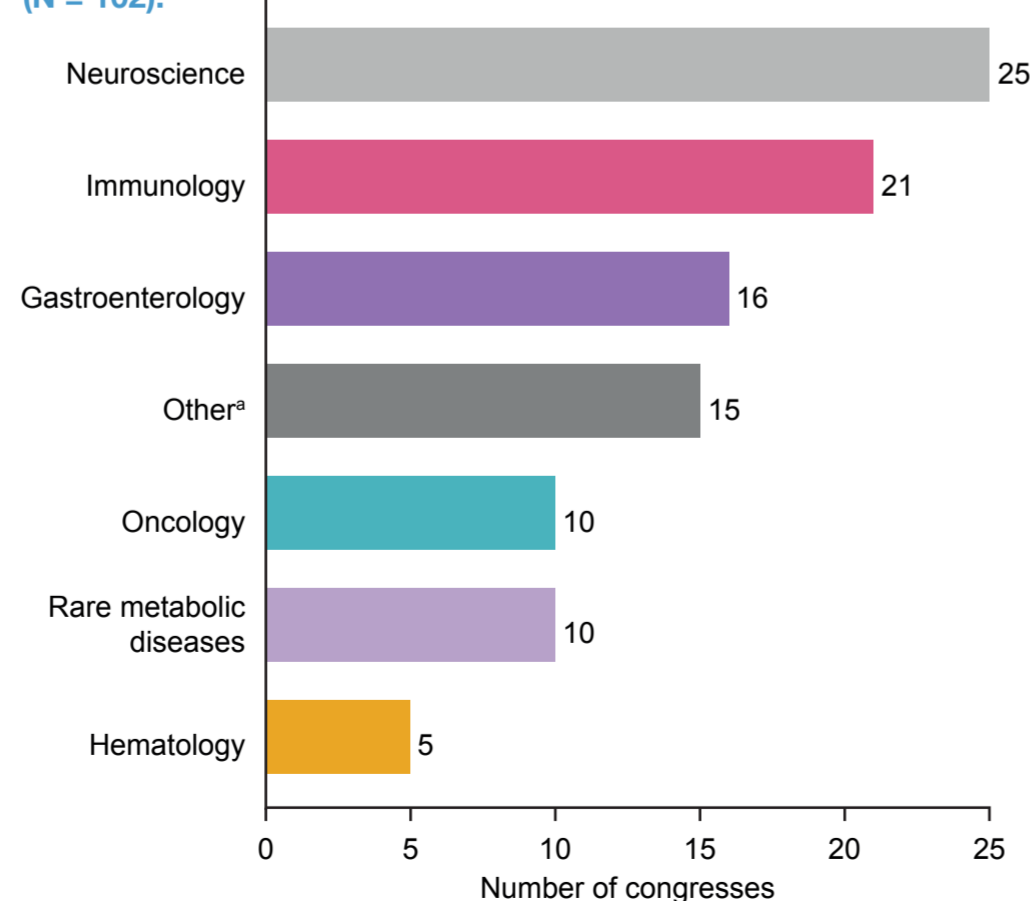
Figure 1. Heatmap of congress format (N = 102).

| Medical Area | APA | IPOS | AAN | SIRS | ISSX-NA | DGGO | EU-NN | SFN | FNN | NRIM | AOCN | EPA | EPC | ASCP | ECNP | ARM | AAFP | USPMHC | AACAP | ESRS | EAN | SLEEP | AAIC | CNS | NEI |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Neuroscience | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled |
| Immunology | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled |
| Gastroenterology | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled |
| Other ^a | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled |
| Oncology | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled |
| Rare metabolic diseases | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled |
| Hematology | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled | Cancelled |

■ Cancelled
■ Postponed
■ Changed to a virtual format

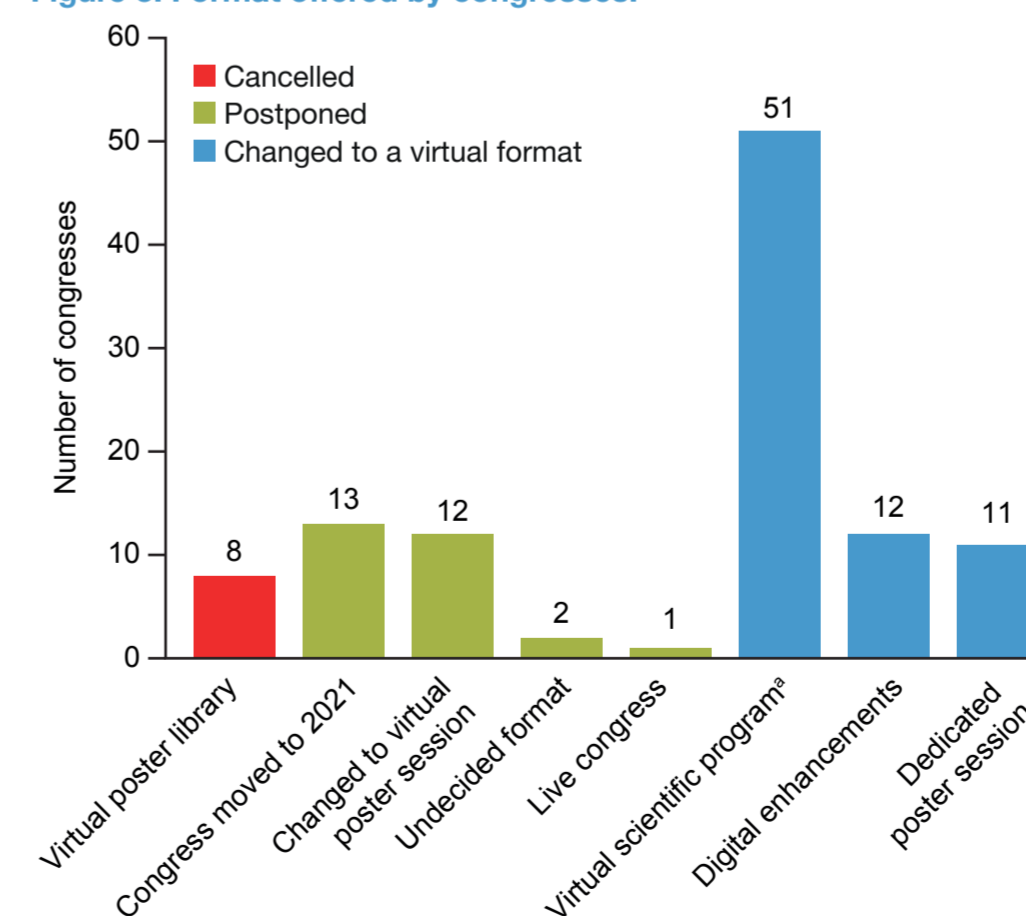
^aOther category includes health economics, outcomes research and pharmacokinetics.

Figure 2. Congresses included in analysis by medical area (N = 102).



^aOther category includes health economics, outcomes research and pharmacokinetics.

Figure 3. Format offered by congresses.



^ae-posters and oral presentations.

Conclusions

- The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic had a profound effect on the 2020 medical/scientific congresses included in this analysis.
 - Half (51%) of the congresses took place in a virtual format only.
 - 22% of the congresses were cancelled.
- Many congresses expanded their scientific programs to include some interactive sessions and offered support for digital enhancements.
- More congresses will likely be held using a virtual format in 2021 owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Disclosures

Valérie Philippon, Shailesh Y Desai, Jessica Tyler, Fran Young, Susan Wieting, Dikran Toroser, Jesse Potash and Colin A McKinnon are employees of Takeda Pharmaceuticals and hold stock and/or stock options.

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