

# It's congress time: virtually!

Philip Wiffen 

This is the second year running when we will not be able to meet face to face following the cancellation of last year's Congress early on due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I guess many of us thought or hoped that things would be better here in 2021, but most of us are still locked down and living with huge restrictions to our lives.

For me, the EAHP Congress is a great opportunity to meet colleagues, review the progress of the journal with the editor team and meet both existing and future authors of the journal. I must confess that in spite of good intentions, I go to few of the sessions as I am frequently busy on journal business.

This year will be different but will give new opportunities as the event is spread over a longer time period (23 March to 28 March 2021), which includes evenings and a full weekend. Given that many hospital pharmacists are coping with the ongoing effects of the pandemic and so extremely busy, the more 'socially distanced' programme will hopefully be more accessible to all.

For the full programme, see: <https://www.eahp.eu/congresses/programme>. Some of

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the sessions will be available to view after the event has closed. I have had the privilege of participation in a large international congress, undertaken virtually, and related to my clinical interest of pain medicine. While the live audience was somewhat smaller than I would have expected for a face-to-face event, the number of delegates who subsequently chose to view the presentation in their own time has continued to rise into the high hundreds.

Here are some thoughts to help you make the most of this year's virtual congress:

1. Plan your schedule for the sessions you want to attend, there is a pdf of the programme that you can download from the Congress website
2. Block out that time in your diary. Set reminders in your calendar and make sure that the dog has been walked, children are sorted and hot drinks available or whatever else is important for you. Plan your downtime such as lunch.
3. Do not be too ambitious—several straight hours in front of a screen is tiring.
4. Try and reduce any distractions—find a quiet space and shut the world out. Turn off your phone. Tell any family what you are doing.

5. Check your tech is working. I still get caught out using tools that I am familiar with as glitches do occur. Do not try and do it all on your smart phone.
6. Be active in the sessions: take notes, write down any questions that occur to ask if there is an opportunity.
7. If you miss a session then catch up later if you can.

I hope many of you will participate in the Congress during the live presentations and benefit from a good deal of evidence and wisdom. As I watch the praise for medics and nurses fighting COVID-19 on the UK TV broadcasts, I am mindful of the hospital pharmacy staff who support and underpin a lot of this activity. All are worthy of our thanks, I hope you will join me in applauding all who have served sacrificially to continue to treat very sick patients and in many cases to save lives.

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