

# Virtual Versus In-Person Learning as a Cardiologist During COVID-19 Pandemic

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One of the high points of my academic year has been the annual American Heart Association (AHA) meeting. It has been a time to meet colleagues from around the world, as well as to update my knowledge in cardiovascular diseases; both basic and clinical research. More and more the “late breaking clinical trials” has been a meeting forum providing the most recent information on major clinical studies. This year coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) has made a major change in meetings, causing them to go virtual by necessity.

AHA virtual was anticipated as a loss to the expected meeting of old colleagues, contacting investigative sponsors and having the time to absorb new trials away from the day to day activities back home. However, the virtual meeting was certainly a welcome event distracting from the current pandemic and providing the basic and clinical science updates. As the meeting progressed, it became apparent that there are distinct advantages of a virtual meeting. The competing events pulling one from room to room could be much more easily managed. One need not sacrifice one interesting lecture for another. Given enough time, one can attend many more lectures, panel discussions, poster presentations, or seminars than one can physically do at an in-person meeting. Yes, in an in-person meeting you have the direct contacts, the dialogue with one’s colleagues and trainees, but one gains a much broader exposure to the basic and clinical science available in a virtual setting.

What one can expect in the future in the post-COVID-19 world is not a return to the usual in-person meeting, but a new meeting hybrid format. Presentations, lectures, seminars need to be made available on request so one can be exposed to a multitude of material, instead of what is limited by 3 days of in-person meetings. To some extent that was available by being able to purchase additional lectures in the past. However, these additional purchases were very expensive, and even if purchased did one rarely have the time to listen to additional lectures after a major meeting. That has changed with the un-

derstanding of how much more can be learned by listening to the additional lectures and presentations available.

This is especially true of the poster sessions where one usually attends those areas that one has special interest and expertise. With posters “online”, one can peruse multiple areas that may very well bring new insights into one’s area of research.

How the post-COVID-19 meetings will be organized in the age of information technology is going to be critical for large multi specialized meetings to survive. The most important and unique aspects of an in-person meeting must be facilitated along with the ability to view multiple, often competing sessions left to the virtual experience. Can this be done in a cost and time effective way? only time will tell.

## Acknowledgments

None to declare.

## Financial Disclosure

None to declare.

## Conflict of Interest

None to declare.

## Data Availability

The author declares that data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

Manuscript submitted December 8, 2020, accepted December 9, 2020

Published online December 11, 2020

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.14740/cr1205>