



Editorial

Why Should Face-to-Face Meetings Need to Resume?

Eric Santamaria, Prof. Dr.¹

¹ Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Hospital General Dr. Manuel Gea Gonzalez, Mexico City, Mexico

Arch Plast Surg 2022;49:139–140.



Eric Santamaria

When was the last time you saw your colleagues and pals at a conference?

Do you remember the first time you heard in person at a meeting from the experts you learned from by reading their books and papers?

How long has it been since you had the opportunity to experience live scientific advances and the development of new instruments in your specialty?

These are just some of the reasons why face-to-face congresses should resume as soon as possible.

As of November 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. Medical education has been significantly affected, surgical training has been blocked, and the learning curve flattened. Sanitary measures to prevent contagion, and to prioritize the lives of each one of us have restricted traveling, forcing us to postpone or cancel almost all our domestic and international congresses.

On the other hand, thanks to the development of telecommunications, webinars and virtual meetings have increased during these desperate times, making it possible to improve medical education, establishing a connection between education centers and experts that would not be possible without communication technology. The advantages of virtual learning tools have been previously acknowledged: the access to information is available across geographic barriers, teaching is delivered by experts from around the world, educators and learners alike demonstrate unprecedented flexibility; didactic lectures are frequently recorded to accommodate those unable to attend, and learning objectives are often clearly defined.^{1–4}

It is well known that Medical Associations must meet periodically in congresses. If we go to the Latin origin of the word Association, it means to unite people, collaborate on a specific topic, act. This activity cannot be performed exclu-

sively in a virtual way, we would lose the human essence, we need to socialize, we need personal contact, and a life where we can relate.

Hybrid events are already growing and are becoming more frequent, but we have always seen them as a “plus” to the face-to-face event, as a tool. In the transmission of knowledge, it is extremely difficult to use this medium for training, or even for the development of discussion tables with people who could not gather in the same physical place.

To resume face-to-face meetings, the topics of health and technology connection will be one of the most recurrent themes and will become one of the main ones when planning an event. This exchange of information will help the entire sector to speed up its reactivation. Those with the best management in this area will have a significant advantage over the others.

In addition to having a solid protocol about COVID-19 or other situations that may arise, the health response to any situation will be one of the most critical and well-planned issues to consider. Medical societies and government offices and entities must partner closely. To achieve this goal, vaccination and the health passport seem to be an inevitable reality as it is necessary to return to what we all want, to travel and socialize again, in short, meet again.

Finally, let's not forget the great opportunity that face-to-face congresses represent to meet mentors or masters. We all remember, when for the first time we had the experience of meeting in-person the teachers from whom we learned by reading their books and articles during the training. To be able to shake hands or take a picture together. These memories with role models surely impacted our future professional development. Not to mention having the chance to make lifelong friendships and international work ties, through social coexistence and activities that go beyond academics.

Another irreplaceable aspect of face-to-face congresses is being able to learn about the new products and technological

Address for correspondence
Eric Santamaria, Prof. Dr.,
Department of Plastic and
Reconstructive Surgery,
Universidad Nacional Autonoma
de Mexico, Hospital General Dr.
Manuel Gea Gonzalez, Mexico
City, Mexico
(e-mail: ericsanta@prodigy.net.
mx).

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0042-1745723>.
ISSN 2234-6163.

© 2022. The Korean Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons. All rights reserved.

This is an open access article published by Thieme under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonDerivative-NonCommercial-License, permitting copying and reproduction so long as the original work is given appropriate credit. Contents may not be used for commercial purposes, or adapted, remixed, transformed or built upon. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

Thieme Medical Publishers, Inc., 333 Seventh Avenue, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10001, USA

advances of commercial sponsors, through live demonstrations or workshops.

No less important is the enormous opportunity that congresses give us to get to know other geographical destinations, their people, their culture, and gastronomy, among others. Traveling, you enjoy life more, broaden your horizons of knowledge and experiences. In short, you enrich the soul, and that is the essence of resuming face-to-face meetings.

Conflict of Interest

E.S. is an editorial board member of the journal but was not involved in the peer reviewer selection, evaluation, or decision process of this article. No other potential conflicts of interest relevant to this article were reported.

References

- 1 Santamaría E, Nahás-Combina L, Altamirano-Arcos C, Vargas-Flores E. Master series microsurgery for residents: results from a comprehensive survey of a multitudinous online course during COVID-19 pandemic. *J Reconstr Microsurg* 2021;37(07):602–607
- 2 Santamaria E, Nahás-Combina L, Altamirano-Arcos C, Vargas-Flores E. Seven steps to deliver a low-cost, efficient, and high-impact online plastic surgery course during COVID-19 confinement: master series microsurgery for residents' experience. *Arch Plast Surg* 2021;48(04):462–466
- 3 Abi-Rafeh J, Azzi AJ. Emerging role of online virtual teaching resources for medical student education in plastic surgery: COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. *J Plast Reconstr Aesthet Surg* 2020;73(08):1575–1592
- 4 Kim YH. Academic exchange in the COVID-19 era. *Arch Plast Surg* 2020;47(04):287–289