

Can a digital scientific conference function as a platform for facilitating two-way learning between researchers and participants?

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Abstract

Background: Responding to requests from research participants, we piloted a program to facilitate two-way learning between researchers and participants through the platform of a digital scientific conference.

Method: Participants were invited to attend the Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC), through a digital platform, and were offered daily small group discussions. Support was provided in the form of daily emails, navigation tips, and a glossary of frequently used terms and acronyms.

Result: The digital conference was well attended, with participants attending a broad spectrum of talks. Convening daily small group discussions was critical in creating a space where two-way learning could occur by allowing participants to interact and share with each other as well as with research professionals. Participants provided input on research design, recruitment, outcomes, and approaches, as well as applicability of research to clinical settings.

Conclusion: Conferences that are remotely accessible offer a unique opportunity to support the engagement and participation of individuals with limited mobility or time. Future conferences should offer research participants either free or reduced registration, and allow them to select the topics they are most interested in. We recommend providing support and a glossary of frequently used acronyms and terms. Future work is needed to replicate this approach in a more diverse group of research-naïve participants.