

The Three Forms of International Society of Nephrology World Congress of Nephrology — Live, Virtual, and Hybrid: Impact of Transition on Attendance and Social Media Coverage



To the Editor: The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the conduct of International Society of Nephrology (ISN) World Congress of Nephrology (WCN) over the past 3 years.^{1–3} ISN WCN19 was a live conference, ISN WCN20 was cancelled because of the pandemic, ISN WCN21 was a fully virtual conference, whereas ISN WCN22 was conducted in hybrid form. This pandemic has impacted conference demographics.

With the need for social distancing and travel restrictions, the first response of scientific community was to cancel or postpone conferences.¹ Therefore, ISN WCN20 was cancelled. However, with enhancement of existing digital platforms allowed ISN to conduct ISN WCN21 in fully virtual manner.¹ As international travel restrictions were eased in late 2021, in-person conferences restarted in hybrid manner. The pandemic accelerated the adoption of hybrid conferencing technologies in the medical field but the impact of this transition over social media coverage of conferences is yet to be studied. Our aim was to evaluate the impact of this transition from live to virtual and hybrid forms on social media coverage of ISN WCN. This retrospective observational study was

done by members of ISN Education. We compared data of ISN WCN19, WCN21, and WCN22. All 3 congresses were covered on various platforms by @ISNeducation social media team, an integral component of ISN Education Working Group.⁴ Detailed methodology has been depicted in [Supplementary Methods \(Supplementary File\)](#).

A comparison of social media coverage data of ISN WCN19, WCN21, and WCN22 has been described in [Table 1](#). Social media engagement of participants of ISN WCN has increased in each conference over the years and it was the highest in the hybrid form of congress. The number of sessions and users were higher in the live form; however, engagement and percentage of live tweeted sessions were higher in virtual and hybrid forms of the congress. Overall, there has been a positive impact of the transition from live to virtual/hybrid form of the congress over attendance and social media coverage of ISN WCN. Detailed results have been depicted in [Supplementary Results \(Supplementary File\)](#).

Hybrid conferences, which combine live and virtual components, offer mixture of benefits of both forms. They are greener alternatives to live conferences because they offer cost savings and environmental benefits by reducing the need for travel. Studies have shown that transitioning from live to virtual conferencing can substantially reduce carbon footprint by 94% and energy use by 90%.⁵ Hybrid conferences are likely to be an important part of the post-COVID-19 medical conference landscape, providing increased accessibility and flexibility, decreased carbon emission while still allowing for in-person interaction and engagement. Further details can be downloaded from [Supplementary File](#).

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

[Supplementary File \(PDF\)](#)

Supplementary Methods.

Supplementary Results.

Supplementary Discussion.

Supplementary References.

Figure S1. Comparison of social media coverage in ISN WCN 2019, 2021, and 2022.

Figure S2. Social media coverage by ISN WCN Social Media team in 2022.

Table 1. Comparison of social media coverage data of ISN WCN 2019 (Live), WCN 2021 (Virtual) and WCN 2022 (Hybrid)

@ISNeducation Social Media coverage	ISN WCN 2019	ISN WCN 2021	ISN WCN 2022
Users	1943	857	886
Impressions	25M	27M	46.6M
Tweets	17,500	13,300	15,100
Retweets	13,700	10,300	12,100
Preconference interviews	34	19	18
Live tweeted sessions	62	73	67
Visual abstracts	30	29	59
Daily quizzes	04	04	04
Twitter space	N/A	N/A	04

ISN, International Society of Nephrology; WCN, World Congress of Nephrology.

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