

Annotation

Poster presentations : New initiative at NAMSCON 2013 at AIIMS Jodhpur

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Besides updating oneself by attending Continuing Medical Education (CME) activities, it is also important for health professionals to attend the conferences, meetings, workshops and symposia conducted as parts of scientific activities of associations and organizations. These meeting provide biomedical scientists and healthcare professionals a platform to share their research, experiences and innovative ideas with a wider audience. These conferences also provide a good opportunity for facilitating knowledge transfer to diverse group of people who are governed by adult learning principles. The various academic bodies aimed to promote 'active learning' among the participants and hence use traditional methods of oral, poster and workshops to meet the goal. Obviously the first preference of biomedical scientists is oral presentations which provide them an opportunity to present detail knowledge of their work in didactic form with options of direct questioning, clarifications and in maintaining conversation with the audience. Poster presentations on the other hand tend to provide 'in-depth' information of research work through a

visual portrait. Originally the poster was used as an introduction to a new piece of research before the paper was published. They serve as standalone mode of expressions.

The National Academy of Medical Sciences (India) conferences are typically having a regional or national symposium followed by oral deliberations by fellow experts of their focused research area in form of orations. The academy recognizes outstanding contributions by biomedical scientists' by conferring membership and fellowships of the academy and awarding the young scientists through various awards.

Till 2013 annual meetings there was limited provision of academic expressions through poster presentations depending on logistics of the organizing institute. There wasn't any format or guidelines for the poster presentations. However, in an Academic Council meeting in July 2013, it was suggested by Prof J S Bajaj, Chairman, Academic Council to formally invite posters from delegates so that delegates also become active participants in the conference and will help in consolidating academy as a

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research body and assist biomedical scientists with an alternative mode of dissemination of their research for wider recognition.

Majority of medical scientists prefer the oral mode because of its obvious advantages. The disadvantages of posters are the passive mode, limited audience, repeating presentation to audience, presenter deprived from viewing others' posters.

The static nature of the poster presentation may not be perceived as promoting an environment that is conducive to 'active learning', although it still meets the expressed professional demand for a constant 'in-depth' overview. In itself, active learning consists of strategies that encourage the learner to engage in activities including the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information.

The current literature on posters is largely limited to discussing the benefits and limitations of the poster as an academic tool and generalized aspects of construction. However, poster offers options of incorporating new technology to enhance its value.

Many innovations have been introduced to circumvent the disadvantages of posters. Posters for longer duration display ensuring the presenter to be present at a pre-selected time with pre-selected period to provide opportunity for inter-personal discussions. Scientists have also experimented with 'Digital Interactive Poster Presentation' (DIPP) (1). Here the poster were invited in digital format also

and were presented with projector along with display in poster arena. This new system allows participation of a larger audience, interactive presentation, and more effective discussion of scientific data. The DIPP permitted presenters to project their poster on a large screen and magnify pre-selected sections (e.g. figures, text, tables) whilst providing a two minute summary of their poster. Whilst this contributed to the special quality of the presentation and ensured author participation; the enhanced illustration of imagery and data did not extend beyond that represented on the poster itself. This has lead researcher to experiment with poster using media. The 'MediaPoster' aimed to combine information technology (IT) with a 'traditional' poster appearance (2)

Idea of using digital frame with video player was to make a poster interesting and suited for demonstrating newer techniques or devices (3).

Foundation for Advancement in Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) uses format of online peer review of poster, gallery walk and then its presentation to a small group followed by projector display to fellows of 3 years along with faculty members as innovative educational project presentation (4, 5).

Though unlike the publications which are peer reviewed, the success of a poster is judged by viewer ship, discussion it generates, leads and collaboration it made. Poster presentations are evolving with digital media, which may affect competence development in this multimodal form of

research communication (6).

In a study by Deonandan among 4th year epidemiology students, the poster experience was on par with, or superior to, a comparable research paper, in terms of both educational appeal and enjoyment. They concluded that “*Mandatory, formal poster presentations are an innovative format for teaching advanced health sciences, and may more accurately reflect the realities of a science career than do more traditional educational formats*” (7). The poster presentations have undoubtedly proved to be the valid form of scientific communication and required flexibility, ingenuity and means to make it more visually appealing to the audience. Their advantages increase many fold since they offer detailed discussion of key areas and immediate feedback for improvement by the interested audience.

The initiative by National Academy of Medical Sciences (India) of introducing poster presentations with guidelines for poster design and presentation will add value to its annual meeting. This also provides Academy to research with ideas of interactive poster, introducing best paper awards and an opportunity to mentor young biomedical scientists with an option of immediate feedback to the presenter.

The experience of the Poster Session at 53rd Annual Conference of the National Academy of Medical Sciences (India) in 2013 was considered satisfactory. A plea was made to make poster, a permanent feature for the future conferences while adding the new innovations which make such poster sessions academically rewarding.

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