3 ways virtual medical research competitions benefit entrants

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What began out of necessity due to the pandemic has become the norm for the AMA Research Challenge. As was the case in 2020 and 2021, the 2022 event will be taking place virtually, rather than in person.

The event is the largest national, multispecialty research event for medical students, residents, fellows and international medical graduates. It offers young and aspiring physicians a chance to showcase their research on a significant stage.

A grand prize of $10,000, sponsored by Laurel Road, will be awarded to the winner of the 2022 AMA Research Challenge. The deadline for abstract submissions is July 12. That is to be followed by poster presentations, a semifinal in October and a final round of competition, in which entrants present to judges, in early December.

The decision to hold the event in a virtual format in 2022 was because of the success of the Research Challenge the past two years. A virtual event presents unique opportunities for entrants. In speaking to past finalists, here’s a look at the reasons a virtual format helps competitors.

Better access

Aimen Vanood, MD, a graduate of Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, in Auburn Hills, Michigan, was one of the five finalists in the 2020 AMA Research Challenge, the first year the event was done virtually.

Dr. Vanood, now a resident physician, said the virtual format can “create a more level playing field in terms of accessibility.”

“Meetings that I previously could never have attended due to cost and travel are now only a click away!” said Dr. Vanood, who is currently finishing up her first year as an internal medicine resident at

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the Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale, Arizona. “This has connected us all not only nationally, but internationally as well. The world of medicine is large, and I think it is very special that physicians and scientists all over the world can participate in these meetings together.”

Learn how to make your work stand out at research conference.

**Fewer jitters to overcome**

Public speaking requires, by definition, that one be in public. Considering that public speaking is one of the more common fears people hold, presenting in a virtual format can help ease jitters, according to 2020 co-winner Victoria Danan.

“Having it be online was a huge help for me, as it eased me into public speaking,” said Danan, a medical student at Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine at Florida Atlantic University. “I spent a whole day doing multiple takes and practicing my presentation skills, watching it back, and improving on it. It was a great first learning experience.”

Find out the four things judges look for in medical poster presentations.

**Chance to build new skills**

Even as the world has moved back to some in-person gatherings, virtual presentations are unlikely to go anywhere.

“I was definitely outside of my comfort zone with the recording, but looking back, I feel that it will be a good skill to have to share research as we move into a new normal which might include more digital conferences,” said Eli Levitt, MD, a 2020 finalist and a graduate of Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.

Dr. Levitt will start his internal medicine residency at Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah, Florida, July 1.

Read the winning projects from the 2020 and 2021 AMA Research Challenge events.