

Moving on from COVID-19

Jaime Chase



Plenary - Moving on from COVID-19 as a global community

Speaker ~ Brian O'Mahony, Ireland

Brian O'Mahony, CEO of the Irish Haemophilia Society, provided a thoughtful plenary on how the bleeding disorders community can move on from the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. He outlined the community priorities and unmet needs prior to COVID-19. His discussion then evolved to new trends in Haemophilia Treatment Centres (HTCs) during the pandemic and the impact experienced by staff, patients and volunteers. Finally, he explored moving forward from the pandemic and the effects that it will have on the community.

BEFORE COVID-19

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the priority of the bleeding disorders community was access to safe, sufficient and affordable therapy for all people with haemophilia and other bleeding disorders. Brian O'Mahony also explored new and novel therapies and the effects of these on the population. However, he pointed out there were continued unmet needs in the population, especially regarding community members with rare bleeding disorders, people with haemophilia who are ageing and women with bleeding disorders.

NEW TRENDS IN HTCS

Clinical practice changed vastly during the pandemic. Telemedicine had been trialled in the past but had never been embedded into clinical practice as the preferred option. Telemedicine allowed clinical assessments to continue, avoided in-person attendance and enabled the patient to maintain contact remotely with their HTC. Some centres were offering remote phlebotomy and electronic prescribing,

which further enabled the physical dependence on HTCs to decrease. Physiotherapy could be offered via telemedicine, which greatly increased patients' adherence and also enabled the introduction of online physical conditioning programs.

IMPACTS ON HTCS AND SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

There was a great increase in requests for telemedicine and the ability to provide outreach services in this way. HTCs had to pivot to provide care within this environment and brainstorm ways to make this transition as useful and as easy for patients as they could. Meetings were held virtually and support organisations switched to working from home. Virtual meetings and conferences were held, which increased registrations and participation but it has been noted that the ability of participants to network with colleagues and peers decreased.

MOVING FORWARD WITH COVID-19

Brian O'Mahony discussed the promotion of telehealth as a viable, equivalent option for all at length, and highlighted its various positive points. HTCs now have the ability to offer a range of appointments and treatment options to suit individual circumstances when providing comprehensive care. Video triage as a viable option for injury management and the provision of offsite phlebotomy would also be advantageous for HTCs.

He recommended that organisations providing meetings and education opportunities should offer the events as a hybrid event to encourage both virtual and in person attendance.

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