

HOW CAN WE MAKE VIRTUAL SCIENTIFIC MEETINGS MORE ENJOYABLE

Member: CPO HANSER SERVICE GmbH
Author: Natalie Schlichting

Over the past year, we have all undoubtedly planned as well as attended various digital meetings. Some were inspiring—perhaps even enjoyable – but several have left us with nothing more than a sort of digital fatigue, yearning for real-life get-togethers.

Hence, the first-ever virtual German Addiction Congress, which took place in September with 90 live sessions and more than 200 speakers, was faced with a challenging question: how to convince the participants that this was not going to be another informative-yet-dull virtual meeting?

To this end, the program committee and CPO HANSER SERVICE as the congress organizer focused not only on having notable international keynote speakers and varied topics but also tried to mix it up by adding classical program patterns and highlighting the ‘infotaining’ character of the congress. The scientific program included scientific symposia and thematic lecture sessions, poster walks, controversial documentaries, and political panels. In addition, workshops and meet-the-expert sessions were beneficial for both addiction therapists working in practice as well as young scientists. The event was rounded out by one author’s reading about her personal experiences as a former alcoholic, as well as free counselling sessions for patients and their relatives.

“The COVID-19 pandemic led to a surge in digitalization not only for the addiction care. This congress sends out an important signal: We move on! We stick to it!” said Jens Spahn, Federal Minister of Health, patron of the German Addiction Congress 2021. Given that performing arts and musical education play a key part in today’s field of addiction therapy, it was obviously a necessary component of the virtual meeting. For instance, the children’s philharmonic choir of Dresden welcomed the participants with a concert produced specifically for the German Addiction Congress. Additionally,

students of the Music Academy of Frankfurt framed the scientific sessions as a common and recurring thread during the breaks, and performed during the closing ceremony. Arguably the absolute highlight, however, was the thematically fitting dance performance ‘Addiction to...’ during the virtual social evening, followed by an interactive artists’ talk in the digital networking area.

In short, the congress and its diverse topics—such as smoking cessation, internet addiction, and addictive drug use during lockdowns—paired with myriad digital formats and cultural interludes, were met with a positive response from participants. Nevertheless, the host city Berlin hopes to welcome the German Addiction Congress on-site in 2023. “Addiction continues to affect a large group of our population. Here, at CPO HANSER SERVICE, we are proud to be able to support initiatives striving to fight against such disorders.” says Inge Hanser, Managing Shareholder. The German Addiction Congress takes place every second year in Berlin with around 600 participants and has been organized by CPO HANSER SERVICE since 2012.

The video of the performance of the Philharmonic Children’s Choir Dresden can be viewed [here](#).



As senior project manager for national and international conferences, Natalie always strives to get the most out of every event and meeting – for the participants as well as for her customers. She started with CPO HANSER SERVICE in 2018

as Project Manager Congresses and has managed several scientific meetings the past 4 years.

[linkedin.com/schlichting-events](https://www.linkedin.com/schlichting-events)