

2020 Annual Meeting Recap

by Kristin Hesselbach, 2021 PharmD Candidate

More than 300 technicians, students, and pharmacists gathered for the first-ever virtual PSW Annual Meeting, which ran from August 26 through August 28. Attendees had access to more than 16 hours of pre-recorded sessions in addition to the usual three days of engaging live sessions. Once registered, members had the opportunity to peruse online content as it fit into their schedules before the meeting even started. Topics were vastly applicable to Wisconsin pharmacies in this novel time with COVID-19. The conference offered up ways for pharmacists and technicians to successfully navigate this landscape while keeping their patients at the core of their attentive care, minimizing burnout, and practicing at the top of their profession.

In the session Promoting Patient Access through Pharmacist Provider Status, Dr. Nick Olson, past president of PSW and Manager of Ambulatory Pharmacy at Froedtert Health, described the impact of pharmacists being added to the list of Medicaid providers. With this addition, pharmacists would receive well-deserved compensation for patient care services under the medical benefit. He discussed the intriguing juxtaposition of provider status versus prescriber status, and how reaching provider status is critical to increasing our patients' access to care, including immunizations, point-of-care testing, or

comprehensive medication reviews, for example.

In another pre-recorded continuing education (CE) session titled Establishing an Ambulatory Care Practice, Dr. Francesca Napolitano described her path to creating an ambulatory pharmacist role at Progressive Community Health Centers. She identified reaching out to different providers and staff currently at the site for buy-in as an important step to establishing her role at the practice. She also encouraged pharmacists to research their respective sites to analyze how they use outcome measures to justify services. Dr. Napolitano created a fantastic resource for current and future pharmacists interested in starting up or expanding ambulatory care services at their sites. Other online pre-recorded CE content addressed Phar 7 regulatory changes, COVID-19 point-of-care testing, considerations with cultural awareness in treatment plans, and population health management.

Live programming kicked off the evening of Wednesday, August 26 with virtual networking and topic discussions. From Coping with COVID to Working from Home and Schooling from Home—Surviving as a Pharmacist Parent to the welcome happy hour, there was a community for conversation for everyone. On Thursday the 27th, the day kicked off with the PSW Get up and GO!, which featured photos and posts from conference attendees around the state

staying active. Then came the first general session of the meeting, the Welcome & PSW Membership Briefing, where PSW President Dr. Mike Gillard and PSW Executive Vice President and CEO Dr. Sarah Sorum discussed being bold, being authentic, and being empathetic. Now more than ever, pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and student pharmacists are in a position to be compassionate, empathetic leaders in the field of healthcare, and we have the opportunity to show our patients that we are listening. Dr. Gillard and Dr. Sorum recognized the incredible work around the state that is already being done in the name of patient advocacy, and highlighted how future provider status approval would set pharmacists up for more sustainable success. Also mentioned were the expansion of pharmacy technician careers with the development of career ladders and how pharmacies will be involved with the provision of the COVID-19 vaccine in the future.

The next live session of the day featured Dr. Thomas Dilworth, Infectious Diseases Specialty Pharmacy Coordinator and PGY2 Infectious Diseases Pharmacy Residency Director at Advocate Aurora Health, and Dr. Lucas Schulz, Infectious Diseases Clinical Coordinator at UW Health. The talk was titled Updates in Our Battle Against Coronavirus and in the Treatment of COVID-19. Being infectious disease experts, this dynamic duo detailed what we know so far about the mechanism of

COVID-19 infection. They then explicated past, current, and possible future treatment modalities focused around evidence-based studies and their composite results. Dr. Dilworth and Dr. Schulz further went on to discuss risk versus possible benefit scenarios of vaccinations that are currently in development. Extremely important to this discussion was the concept of vaccine hesitancy. The speakers emphasized how premature vaccination of the general population coupled with poor vaccine efficacy might cause distrust in the benefits of immunization and put communities at risk for low compliance when higher quality vaccines reach the market. Further discussion in the session revolved around the differences in current COVID-19 tests and testing practices.

As lunchtime approached, conference-goers passed through the “Hallway” Conversations Zoom to catch up and network before visiting the Lunch and Learn by Incyte on the topic of Pemazyre (Pemigatinib): The First and Only Treatment for Locally Advanced or Metastatic Cholangiocarcinoma. This was followed by the Exhibit Showcase featuring 27 different virtual booths on topics ranging from tobacco cessation to diabetes, hematology, oncology, and many more. Booth visitors could virtually connect through video chat lines with hosts to discuss new treatment modalities and results of emerging clinical studies.

Afternoon programming included the Health-System Pharmacy Leadership Forum: Adapting the Health-System Pharmacy Enterprise Post COVID-19 Response. Students, technicians, and pharmacists engaged in breakout sessions that covered flexible staffing and change management, telehealth and ambulatory care, virtual precepting, drug supply shortages, site of care challenges, and clinical decision support with informatics. This format allowed for very unique conversations with contributions from many different points of view, and often, many different solutions were provided to shared roadblocks in provisions of care to patients.

The evening concluded with the PSW Awards Presentation, featuring awards for Pharmacist of the Year, the Distinguished Service Award, the PSW Interdisciplinary

Care Partner Award, Young Pharmacist of the Year, Bowl of Hygeia, Curtis Johnson Award, WPQC Engagement Award, WPQC Innovation Award, Excellence in Innovation, Pharmacy Technician of the Year, and Student Achievement Awards.

Friday morning began with expansive networking opportunities. With session topics covering telehealth services, virtual precepting, leadership and professional development, and ambulatory care. The first general program of the day was The Impact of Systemic Racism on Health and Health Care Systems in Wisconsin given by Dr. Tito Izard, President and CEO of Milwaukee Health Services Incorporated. Dr. Izard defined healthcare disparities specifically in Wisconsin and discussed how, as healthcare professionals, we cannot turn a blind eye to these inequities. Instead, he challenged members of the pharmacy community to work to correct these gaps in care by being advocates for patients in underserved populations. Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and student pharmacists are incredibly accessible to patients, and as such, we must lead by example to help engage the rest of the healthcare community.

Dr. Mike Gillard followed up next with his transitioning remarks and installation of the new PSW board. AstraZeneca and Paradigm then led Exhibit Theater Lunch and Learns on coronary artery disease and influenza management, respectively. In the

afternoon, students and pharmacists came together to present more than 20 different topics in the annual Poster Session where attendees could visit with the researchers and presenters to see their work and ask questions.

Given the unique virtual platform, the Residency Showcase was unlike any previous year. Students had the chance to meet one-on-one with residents and program directors in 10-minute time slots to discuss program specifics, answer questions, and make personal connections. These closed-room sessions were then followed up by a half-hour of open meeting rooms for students to pass through additional programs to continue networking. For pharmacists and technicians not attending the aforementioned programs, there were also sessions for attendees to meet the PSW board, meet the speakers, discuss opioid stewardship and pain management, and review PSW engagement opportunities.

Annual Meeting 2020 was a resounding success that adapted to the current online landscape and proved that the pharmacy community will continue to serve our patients in the best capacity possible no matter the circumstances.

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