

Editorial

GTH 2021: simply online ... worth experiencing

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The 65th congress of the Society of Thrombosis and Haemostasis Research, the GTH 2021, will take place “simply online”. This will be the first time in the congress history, and I thank the Editor in Chief of *Hämostasologie – Progress in Haemostasis*, Prof. Rüdiger Scharf, for giving me the opportunity to write a brief commentary on this unusual congress format.

ACROSS BORDERS

The motto of the GTH 2021 is ACROSS BORDERS. I chose these two words in order to highlight the fascinating interdisciplinary character of clinical and research activities in the field of Haemostasis and Thrombosis. I urge you to visit the congress webpage (www.gth2021.org) and discover the organisation committee in which serve theme leaders from several clinical disciplines that we interact with daily. This interdisciplinary character is reflected in the topics of the State-of-the-Art and Oral Communication sessions. ACROSS BORDERS addresses also the challenge to think across the lines, both in a humanistic and scientific way; this aspect will be addressed by the Plenaries entitled “Thrombosis & Haemostasis across borders”, “Physicians across borders” and “Thinking across borders”. Finally, ACROSS BORDERS was supposed to highlight the fact that for the first time in its history, the GTH congress would have taken place in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Instead, the tiny virus SARS-CoV-2 changed our big plans and offered us an even bigger challenge.

The digital barrier

Facing the first pandemic wave of COVID-19 it soon became clear that it would have not been possible to organize a classic face-to-face meeting. At first, we considered the option of a hybrid congress. The observation we made during this phase was very interesting. The majority of the speakers and members of the organising committees were hoping for

this option, asking for planning flexibility for as long as possible. Completely opposite was the position of the partners of the industry, asking for the decision of a virtual congress as soon as possible. It was a debate between passion and reason. Eventually, on August 2020, during a videoconference with the GTH Council, we decided to go for a GTH congress “simply online”. The new challenge was to break the limitations imposed by a digital format and identify the opportunities offered by this situation.

Simply online ... worth experiencing

Possibly, the online congress will attract curious minds who would not have attended a face-to-face GTH congress, thus widening our audience. This will depend on our ability to advertise the congress outside our usual areas of activity. For this we need your help!

The scientific part of the congress will be pre-recorded in order to achieve the best technical performance possible. The lectures will be available online for on-demand viewing on the congress virtual platform till the end of March 2021 and afterwards – possibly virtually unlimited – on the congress website. This opportunity will solve the problem of choosing between parallel sessions. You will be able to listen to the various scientific contributions, from Plenaries to Oral Communications, at your convenience. You could even organize a “beer & pizza workshop”, enjoying your preferred talks with your team!

State-of-the-Art sessions and Oral Communications will be held in a “classic” format with the novel possibility to ask your questions via chat. These will be discussed at the end of the session in a live Q&A format moderated by the chairs. Posters will be displayed in an interactive gallery with the opportunity to listen to a brief vocal message of the author, summarizing the key aspects of her/his work. Additionally, in order to foster the interaction with the authors, online discussion forums will be available for both Oral Communications and Posters during the whole congress.

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Finally, Master Classes will take place as live videoconferences. After a brief conceptual introduction by the expert, participants will have the opportunity to animate the discussion, which will last until the last question will be answered.

The industrial exhibition will be created in a lively 3D platform, in which you will be able to stroll with your avatar visiting the booths of the various companies, interacting with their representatives, and taking note of the information – brochures, scientific articles, and videos – on display. The industry has seriously taken up the challenge of supporting the online format of the GTH congress, and at the time of this writing, all major companies have booked virtual exhibition surface. We are expecting to offer twenty very interesting satellite symposia. Of note, a virtual exhibition appears to be problematic for small companies, with less financial and technical means and relying even more on personal contacts. Nevertheless, also smaller companies are supporting the GTH 2021 congress.

Sounds and silence

At my first ASH congress, I attended a lecture held by Russell Ross on the inflammatory pathogenesis of arteriosclerosis. Just as he was about to start speaking, the carousel with his slides (yes, there was a time before the memory stick) fell to the floor. A dismayed silence filled the auditorium. Russell Ross, considering the impossibility to restore the correct sequence of the slides, started to speak anyway. That was a superb lecture! I am still impressed by his ability to recollect the sequence of the concepts and information he had chosen to present and how well he was able to bring to life those concepts in the mind of the listeners.

At the GTH 2021 Congress, there will be no sound of crushing slides nor moments of dismayed silence. We will not meet face-to-face, and we will miss the personal encounter with colleagues and friends, but we will have the opportunity to enjoy a congress with excellent speakers, high-quality scientific contributions, and an unusual challenging format: **simply online ... worth experiencing.**