Emerging Standards and the Hybrid Model
for Organizing Scientific Events During & After COVID-19

1. Risk Assessment & Mitigation
   1) Perform risk assessment before planning for a scientific meeting to consciously judge the probability of infection transmission and how to mitigate governing factors
   2) Use WHO guidelines to score and categorize the risks as Very Low, Low, Moderate, or Very High
   3) Plan for mitigation risks

2. Venue & Environmental Sanitation
   1) All staff and executives in charge of venue preparations should be trained about cleaning and efficient disinfection methods
   2) Dedicate personnel to provide careful health and safety monitoring and to supervise the disinfecting process
   3) Make hand sanitizers widely accessible for participants
   4) Account for physical distancing rules when arranging seats at conference halls and for social interactions at session breaks
   5) Provide meals/snacks in disposable packages, avoiding buffets

3. Participant Protection & Disease Prevention
   1) Look to WHO guidelines for appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and specific needs of expected attendees
   2) Participants with COVID-19 symptoms should NOT be allowed to attend
   3) Consult CDC standards for how to deal with persons with recent contact with COVID-19 patients (quarantine & symptom monitoring)
   4) At time of entry, participants should provide recent negative COVID-19 test results and be screened for symptoms
   5) Equip all participants with PPE and ensure access to hand sanitizer as appropriate

4. The Hybrid Model
   1) Having parallel virtual sessions can be advantageous not only for symptomatic participants but also for distanced persons who cannot attend the conference due to travel/quarantine restrictions
      Examples: Local in-person hubs in parallel with online virtual activities
     For social interactions, engage virtual participants through a social portal which can involve both virtual and in-person participants
   2) Consider virtual reality (VR) that can simulate presence at the event itself including both formal and informal "face-to-face" events
     One can now consume VR content via a smartphone and cardboard/plastic glasses although quality of the internet connection remains a barrier

SOURCES

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