



Maximizing your Congress Experience

Extract more value from congress planning and attendance. Discover tools, tips and strategies to help you do more with the insights you gather at major industry events.

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Introduction

Medical congresses are high-value events where attendees can engage in scientific exchange and gather data to make more informed business decisions. These congresses are critical for keeping up with the latest life science industry standards and best practices – with live presentations and ongoing discussions with other opinion leaders helping organizations develop a clearer understanding of drug development and launch factors, new clinical data, and patient treatment options.

Much like the life science industry itself, medical congresses do not stand still. There are intriguing developments on the horizon for the congress circuit, with emerging technologies changing the way that attendees participate, monitor trending conversations, and act on the insights they gather. But there are challenges, too: the proliferation of data and data channels; competition from larger or more agile rivals; and the pressure to make an immediate, significant impact at or soon after launching a product that took years to bring to market.



HYBRID BECOMES THE NEW STANDARD

“The future of medical congresses will be shaped by trends such as the increasing use of digital technology, interdisciplinary collaboration, and patient-centered care. Virtual platforms and immersive technologies will enhance educational content and networking experiences.”

– [THE CRISIS OF MEDICAL CONGRESSES AND THE FUTURE AHEAD](#)

In the years following the pandemic, medical congresses have returned to largely in-person affairs – but that doesn’t mean we’ve learned nothing from the experiment with virtual events. Moving forward, the vast majority of medical congresses will be hybrid events – allowing attendees to enjoy networking in person, while opening up attendance to a broader, more diverse range of participants.

As Carmine Zoccali and Francesca Mallamaci explore in their paper ‘The crisis of medical congresses and the future ahead’, life science teams are embracing “innovative solutions” to engage with medical congresses in new ways, while congresses themselves are becoming increasingly tech-enabled. But how do these changes affect congress planning and execution? How can life science teams make their efforts more targeted and valuable?



HCPS AND THE SHIFT TO DIGITAL

Increasingly hybridized medical congresses simply reflect the changing nature of the life science industry itself. Increasingly, HCPs can themselves be found and engaged online. A recent study found that 78% of HCPs use social networks for professional purposes, while 21% see podcasts as very or extremely important resources for staying abreast of treatment options. - [CMI MEDIA GROUP](#)

The challenges of the traditional congress model

Ironically, congress planning is a complex process often made more complex still by tools intended to simplify it. Congresses are logistics-heavy, and the technologies designed to enhance communication (email, text messaging, video conferencing) only contribute to the hectic, multichannel nature of congress planning.



Managing multiple pre-event input streams – including identifying who should attend, creating assets like posters and other educational materials, and planning the day-to-day coverage of important sessions and one-to-one meetings with key opinion leaders – takes place alongside more tactical planning, such as travel logistics and internal coordination.

Once on-site at a congress, teams are often spread thin trying to take in as much scientific exchange as possible. There might be time for colleagues to come together and share what they've learned, but typically these efforts fall by the wayside in favor of networking opportunities and the crush of congress activities. Post-congress, the story is much the same – as HCPs and peers wrap up meetings and plan to head home, the all-important capture of insights becomes a fragmented process that sometimes takes weeks or months to complete.

THE FUTURE OF MEDICAL CONGRESSES? SPECIFICITY AND INCLUSIVITY

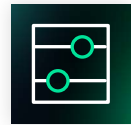
“While HCPs are often the primary audience for congress booths, 2024 was marked by a continuation of efforts by pharmaceutical companies to increasingly elevate the patient voice and demonstrate patient centrality... From an expanding (or strengthening) focus on patient experiences and environmental sustainability to creating immersive experiences in small spaces or dividing large spaces into bespoke functional areas, exhibits can increasingly be tailored to meet unique needs.” – [PMLIVE](#)

So, what's the impact when pharma teams can't improve their congress planning approach, which often takes place across disparate teams via a variety of disconnected systems?

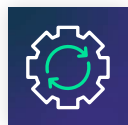
- Missed opportunities to further business strategy
- Failure to increase speed-to-market versus the competition
- Lack of improvement in patient outcomes

A congress planning best practice checklist

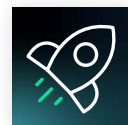
Is your congress planning:



Tech-enabled?



Backed by strategy?



Part of your holistic launch intelligence approach?

If you answered “no” to any of these three questions, consider this: congress events are just one part of a bigger picture, and have value far beyond a weeklong event. To make the most of these important opportunities, use these best practices to get started with a more modern, intelligence-driven congress strategy that makes sense of complex planning and yields deeper, more actionable insights.

1

Use social media listening to help achieve your goals

Your planning checklist is likely exhaustive, and includes everything from determining attendees and assessing logistics to scoping abstracts and planning publications. Social listening can inform important pre-congress preparations, including:

- ✓ Gathering info on the KOLs and DOLs in attendance
- ✓ Scanning relevant scientific abstracts
- ✓ Monitoring breaking news and competitor activity

These information streams will help you stay on top of critical topics and the people you'll want to talk to during the event. The monitoring of social platforms can also take place off-site, meaning your peers at the event are free to focus on congress activities.

2

Conduct asynchronous meetings during the congress

While it's true you can't be in two places at once, you can fully participate in face-to-face congress activities and meet with your colleagues asynchronously. Teams can log in to a virtual platform on their own schedule to capture feedback in near real-time:

- ✓ Share impressions from 1:1 KOL engagements
- ✓ Review trends and communicate key concepts
- ✓ Interact with peers who couldn't attend in-person

Rather than waiting until after the congress is over to compile insights, teams can start sharing information in the moment, when recall is fresh and new input is top-of-mind.

3

Refocus social listening and asynchronous interaction after the congress

Organizing all of the information you gather during a congress can take weeks or months – time during which new data may emerge to change the scientific narrative. Get ahead of this challenge by using post-congress social listening to:

- ✓ Understand KOLs' top takeaways
- ✓ Keep up with discussion around your disease community
- ✓ Monitor conversations about your brand

Finally, use asynchronous collaboration to share what you learned, plan KOL/DOL engagements, and update field teams and MSL strategy.

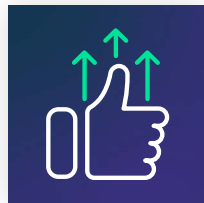
A better way: An intelligence-driven congress strategy

There are several key benefits of applying a robust intelligence strategy to your medical congress participation. These include:



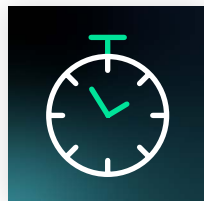
Better preparation

Using technology to monitor social platforms ahead of an event can help teams focus on what they want to discuss—and with whom—during the event. As part of your congress strategy, natural language processing helps reduce manual analysis and surface trending topics. Teams can also use [asynchronous engagement](#) applications before, during, and after congress events to set goals, share impressions, and build consensus.



Logistical advantages

Virtual capabilities add flexibility to the agenda if last-minute additions are needed. Teams can see observations gathered in near real-time, even if they're not onsite. And if asynchronous engagement is used during a congress, teams will likely gather more information by collecting it in one convenient online place – rather than sifting through the chaos of email chains and text messages post-event.



Measurability

Technology provides a way for organizations to measure not just attendance – who showed up to which meetings – but engagement and effectiveness. Using asynchronous and live virtual interactions before, during, and after congress events helps teams capture more insight and feedback in the moment, while thoughts and impressions are fresh in attendees' minds.

HYBRID CONGRESSES AND INCLUSIVITY

“We would encourage conference organizers to redouble their efforts to find technological fixes and to share best practices — and for attendees to highlight solutions that have worked for them. Organizing committees should prioritize making their events available online, not only for parents with childcare commitments, but also for people who lack the funds or visas, or are otherwise unable to attend in person.” - [NATURE](#)



But these factors aren't the only compelling reason pharma teams should change their approach to congress participation. Drug and device developers are dealing with a greater challenge: the volume of insights from multiple channels, which need to be organized, interpreted, and shared.

New technologies are helping life science teams prioritize medical insights and market intelligence in their congress planning efforts. These technologies include:

Network analytics

Maps the strengths and volume of connections between HCPs. This technology looks at topics that matter to medical affairs teams, and examines what's known as the 'invisible college' – a network of like-minded peers and experts that aren't affiliated with any single organization or authority, and are motivated by the search for knowledge and scientific discovery.

Social listening

Tracks social media platforms for mentions and conversations about your disease community, then analyzes them to discover opportunities.

Asynchronous virtual engagement

Any-time, or asynchronous engagement, is similar to an online university format where a discussion is available to participants for a set period of time. Interaction takes place on a web-based platform over a period of days or weeks.

Life science-trained natural language processing

In a medical affairs context, natural language processing, or NLP, technology can break apart the text of collected intelligence and identify meaningful concepts that can be tracked, flagged, grouped, or otherwise organized. When organizations can use this technology on a high volume of intelligence gathered from experts, they can more quickly identify trends and concepts that help drive strategy and enable faster, more accurate decision-making.

By integrating these technologies throughout the congress process – before, during, and after – it's possible to capture more insights from more sources and put them to better use. Here's how a medical affairs team, for example, might apply these technologies to the different phases of congress planning and execution:



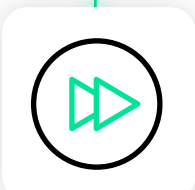
Pre-congress:

- Monitor social channels to map key people and trends. Understand prevailing sentiment and identify experts to meet during the event.
- Ideate, create, and confirm abstract text in an asynchronous platform with document annotation. Everyone contributes when they're able, so every voice is heard.



During the congress:

- Use social listening to track near real-time impressions and discussions. Publish content that drives engagement with digital opinion leaders and other experts.
- Set up an asynchronous congress huddle during the annual meeting; no complicated back-and-forth scheduling for 15 distracted minutes in a noisy conference room.
- Capitalize on event momentum and hold a live virtual advisory board during the congress. Use asynchronous pre- and post-meeting elements to make the most of everyone's time.



Post-congress:

- Continue to monitor social channels to track takeaways shared by congress attendees. Analyze social media impact before, during, and after the event and build a strategy to deepen opinion leader relationships.
- Build on post-congress buzz with asynchronous and live virtual sessions to regroup, react, and share important intelligence gleaned from KOLs during the event.
- Establish an online resource center, so congress abstracts, posters, and videos are always accessible to internal stakeholders.

USING CONGRESS INSIGHTS TO INFORM STRATEGY

“Field medical education before launch is linked to greater launch success, improving treatment adoption by up to 50%. New data also finds that biopharmas investing in pre-launch scientific outreach gain 40% faster treatment adoption. Conferences, in particular, have the strongest influence on clinical decisions.” – [PHARMEXEC](#)

How your peers are using technology in congress planning

Life science organizations already use technology to be more strategic about how they plan, participate in, and maximize the value of medical congresses. Here are a few real-world examples of how technology can enable a more holistic launch intelligence-focused approach.

BEFORE: Congress social monitoring to capture real-time intelligence, ID new experts

A medical affairs team wanted to gather intelligence from a major medical congress. Their objectives included:

1. Identify key opinion leaders posting about the congress
2. Monitor disease community chatter related to the congress
3. Monitor congress chatter around 30+ keywords related to both the company and its competitors

The team used [Within3's social listening](#) tools to monitor chatter from critical stakeholders and other experts pre- and post-congress. They successfully identified new expert voices and captured real-time insights, discovering that many of their target KOLs were highly active online and frequently engaged with congress-related topics.

Rather than manually monitoring blogs, forums, and other major platforms simultaneously while making sense of the multiple information streams, using Within3's congress monitor allowed the medical affairs team to identify which topics, trials, and sessions garnered the most online attention during the event.

Based on the congress-related conversations, the medical affairs team was able to:

- ✓ Discover four new expert voices
- ✓ Identify trending topics during the event, and gauge which trials and sessions generated the most buzz
- ✓ Determine how online conversations differed from what was happening on the conference floor
- ✓ Understand overall sentiment around data releases from their organization and competitors
- ✓ Learn how HCPs were discussing the impact of a specific trial on the disease community – providing unscripted and unbiased expert opinions

DURING: Gaining HCP feedback at a medical congress

A medical affairs team wanted to capture physician feedback about information presented at a medical congress. The physicians – all specialists in variations of a specific type of disease – would be asked to provide input based on their observations at the congress.

The team wanted to understand:

- 1. Current treatment practices and challenges
- 2. Models of care
- 3. Emerging data about disease variants

The medical affairs team used an asynchronous platform to collect information from the physicians daily during the congress. The team set up three congress huddle sessions in the platform, in addition to a post-congress advisory board session. Physicians were invited to one or more huddle sessions based on specialization in different disease variants, and all of the physicians were invited to participate in the post-congress session.

During the congress, the medical affairs team uploaded copies of posters at the event, and the physicians answered questions about the poster presentations. This approach did not require the physicians to attend a live meeting during the event, yet still allowed the team to collect insights in near real-time. The post-congress session enabled physicians to provide final thoughts even as they traveled home and returned to their regular schedule.

Key results included:

- ✓ Increased convenience for physicians
- ✓ Higher volume and quality of insights and intelligence
- ✓ Last-minute attendance changes did not preclude the ability to give feedback

AFTER: Online resource center for congress highlights

A medical affairs team needed a way to share information generated at medical congress events with conference attendees and internal personnel.

Objectives included:

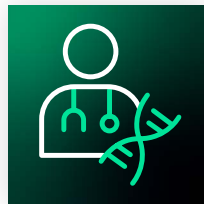
- 1. Provide access to posters, abstracts, and symposium recordings in one authoritative location
- 2. Share data and news post-congress with all internal attendees and interested personnel
- 3. Create a space to share scientific information

The team established an online resource center where congress attendees and other internal personnel could obtain information after congress events. Several events are held each year, and the resource center provides the flexibility to organize and present information for each congress. When there is new activity in the resource center directly following a congress event, members receive an email to alert them to the availability of new resources. The medical affairs team uses the email digest to spread awareness and learnings to internal personnel.

As a result, the team successfully used the resource center for several congress events, including ISPAD, EASD, and ADA. Posters, daily summaries, videos, and other content varieties are easily accessible within a single resource center.

Maximizing congresses for a more effective drug launch

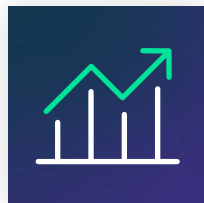
Medical congresses are pivotal moments in the drug launch timeline, providing both medical affairs and commercial teams with critical opportunities to refine strategy, build relationships, and accelerate market success. With the right approach, these events can serve as powerful launchpads for new therapies.



Medical affairs: Driving scientific exchange and insights

For medical affairs teams, congresses are essential for establishing credibility, presenting data, and engaging with key opinion leaders (KOLs) and digital opinion leaders (DOLs). These events provide an opportunity to:

- Share **clinical data** in a high-impact setting and gather feedback from the scientific community.
- Monitor **real-time sentiment** around trial results, treatment approaches, and competitive developments through social listening.
- Capture **unscripted insights** from HCPs, shaping post-congress engagement and refining scientific messaging.



Commercial teams: Strengthening market readiness

For commercial teams, congresses offer unique insights into competitive positioning and HCP sentiment. A strong congress strategy enables teams to:

- Assess **competitor activity** and engagement strategies in real-time.
- Build **pre-launch momentum** by establishing relationships with key stakeholders.
- Test and refine **commercial messaging** based on live feedback before broader market deployment.



An integrated approach: Connecting medical and commercial teams

The most effective congress strategies are developed when medical affairs and commercial teams are working in sync. By aligning objectives before, during, and after congress events, organizations can extract more value from their participation:

- **Pre-Congress:** Identify key stakeholders, track scientific discussions, and align messaging across teams.
- **During Congress:** Leverage asynchronous engagement to collect real-time insights and ensure cross-functional teams stay informed.
- **Post-Congress:** Analyze key takeaways to refine medical and commercial strategies, improving launch execution.

Medical congresses are no longer just networking events—they are strategic moments that can significantly impact launch success. By embracing an **intelligence-driven approach**, life science teams can ensure that insights gathered at congresses translate into actionable strategies that drive better outcomes.





Key takeaways

Medical congresses are evolving, and life science teams must adapt to extract maximum value from these high-impact events. By leveraging modern tools and an intelligence-driven approach, organizations can enhance insights gathering, improve collaboration, and drive better decision-making. For teams preparing for a drug launch, congresses provide a crucial opportunity to engage with key stakeholders, refine scientific and commercial strategies, and accelerate market readiness.

To take the first steps toward a more modern approach to congress planning, start with the following:

- Identify processes before, during, and after congress events that pose challenges around collecting and using intelligence. These are your opportunities – where can technology eliminate manual processing, guesswork, and complexity?
- Determine whether or not your organization already has access to insights management technology, including social listening and asynchronous virtual engagement. If not, identify vendors with solutions that can be onboarded quickly.
- Work to cultivate relationships with like-minded colleagues who are open to trying a new approach to congress activities and form a task force or center of excellence that drives innovation.

ABOUT WITHIN3

At Within3 we empower life sciences leaders to make smarter, faster, and more strategic decisions by delivering the insights they need—when they need them. Whether it's planning launches or driving growth strategies, we help our customers deeply understand market needs and engage to change opinion, sentiment, and behavior.

We leverage our proprietary, life sciences-trained AI to gather and synthesize insights and intelligence from diverse sources, including field data, social listening, scientific conferences, patient and payer engagement, advisory boards, key opinion leader (KOL) identification, and more. By analyzing these inputs, we uncover the most relevant insights and intelligence to ensure our customers connect with the right audiences at the right time with the right message.

What sets us apart? Not only did we pioneer the field of insights management, but we also partner with all 20 of the top pharmaceutical companies worldwide, proving our expertise and reliability. Our platform goes beyond aggregating data—it delivers actionable intelligence that transforms decision-making and improves product development, launch excellence, and market impact across the product lifecycle. Our team of dedicated experts, located across time zones and geographies, helps our customers derive the maximum value from our platform.

With a track record of delivering real-world results, we're the trusted partner for life sciences companies looking to navigate extremely complex industries while rapidly driving growth with confidence.

Learn more at www.within3.com.