

2021 All-Virtual ASPAN National Conference

Ruth Novack MSN, RN, CCRN, CPAN, CAPA

I want to thank ASPAN and the Board of Directors for granting me a National Conference Scholarship. Although the ASPAN National Conference has ended, we have been privileged this year to continue participating in the sessions on into August. This was not my first endeavor with a virtual platform; however, as I was excitingly moving around the house and preparing my area and coffee for the conference to start, my husband mentioned “isn’t it on Eastern time?” Ouch, I was late to the opening. I would like to pause here and send a shoutout to the ASPAN leadership and planning committee for their diligence and commitment to the conference attendees, the usability of the site, and their availability for questions. From Past-President Card’s opening address to President Kilgore’s closing thoughts, every day was filled with opportunity.

I found the virtual environment to be more opportunistic in that sessions were not limited by numbers, therefore, allowing for more flexibility in what I chose to attend. Another aspect of the virtual conference is the ability to access sessions after the end of the conference allowing a more flexible timeframe for attendance. Jimmy Page’s keynote speech “The Power of Positive Leaders” challenged me to pay more attention to my daily interactions and communication style. In an episodic environment such as the perianesthesia area, it is easy to forget those small interactions that encourage unity and promote success.

I was ambivalent to the functionality of a virtual President’s Reception. I was impressed with how relaxing and enjoyable it was to participate and see everyone’s responses in the sidebar. The photo slideshow and the DJ selection of music was fun, and as always, I got a charge out of the Village People and “YMCA.” It seems to be a theme song of ASPAN receptions. It was fun to see and to reminisce about what a great time we had at past conferences and how everyone looks forward to seeing each other in person again.

Another item I enjoyed was the posters being online. It is such an inspiration to see all these nurses developing evidence-based practice and promoting change. Having the posters online offered an opportunity to have uninterrupted time to pay more attention to the team members and the hospitals that are active in EBP development and disseminating their findings. It was interesting to compare how many of these EBPs my organization is in the process of developing or what I can bring forward.

I would encourage anyone to consider the opportunities of virtual attendance as an alternative to attending. I felt educationally I took as much away as attending in person. However, the social connection and networking associated with an in-person conference brings the spirit of the conference alive. In the future, I hope there is the potential for a hybrid seminar and registration as a combination so then full sessions can be attended online. I look forward to seeing everyone in 2022 in Philadelphia, PA.