

Virtual Pathology conference experience: Manchester Pathology 2021

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The COVID-19 pandemic affected our lives in ways we could never imagine. While I am extremely grateful to have survived this along with my loved ones, I cannot deny the negative affect it was having on my learning and professional growth with postponement of exams and cancellation of all in person meetings and conferences. When I heard about virtual Manchester pathology conference from a colleague, I knew I had to attend it. Luckily, I had two interesting cases with me that I wanted to share. One was a young lady who was suspected to have a dermoid cyst which turned out to be a squamous cell carcinoma arising in a mature cystic teratoma. The tumor was large and ruptured during surgery. Unfortunately, she had a short fatal clinical course, in contrast to most somatic malignancies arising in mature cystic teratomas. The second abstract was on cervical hemangiomas as a cause of vaginal bleeding. I finalized the drafts and discussed with my attendings. Once I submitted the drafts for the meeting, I also applied for the bursary as conference registration funding is difficult to secure for virtual events.

Earlier in May I received the good news that not only my abstracts were accepted but I was also granted a bursary. When the conference program was released, I couldn't believe it. It was like the program were crafted for me. The lectures were focused on the pertinent issues that pathologists face every day like assessment of progestin treatment effect on atypical hyperplasia and endometrial cancer, something I always struggle with. Another lecture that I was looking forward to was Diagnostic accuracy of cytology in detecting endometrial cancer since many times we encounter patients who refuse endometrial sampling either because of being a virgin or some other personal reason.

The good things about the conference format were that we could upload our poster presentation and then take questions live during the conference. All lecture recordings were available after the conference, that means I could take breaks in between. This was especially a plus for me because of the UK-Qatar Time difference.

The conference started on 6 of July and I was happy to present both of my posters on this day, so I can relax and enjoy the rest of the conference with coffee, in the leisure of my home. The practice session we had before the conference really helped as I was familiar with the technicalities. I must say this was the best poster presentation I have ever done before as I was asked so many questions and two pathologist moderators were present in the question-and-answer session to help me through it. After that, I indulged in my favorite topic's lectures. Early diagnosis and prevention of gynecological cancer lecture series was a delight as important topics such as molecular classification of endometrial cancer, lynch syndrome association with endometrial cancers and Inherited gynecological cancers were discussed.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed the conference and learned a lot. The topics were practical challenges that pathologists face and lectures were to the point. I am very thankful to BDIAP for the generous bursary and will highly recommend that all pathology trainees join this wonderful platform.