

4 Tips for making the most of your conference experience

1. Prepare before the conference

Set personal goals. Read the program details and decide what you want from the experience? Who do you want to listen to or meet? Create a personal schedule to reflect your goals.

Get informed. Download the conference app (if available). Use the Twitter hashtag to see what people are saying and share your own commentary and photos.

Get organized. Bring a lightweight notebook or phone/iPad for conference details. Record the conference name, key contact information and conference hashtag where it is handy. Consider bringing business cards or creating cards with your contact information for networking. Take notes so you can comment on sessions and conference features for evaluation and reports, example the PAN survey

Spread the word. Share conference details and experiences with networks (like PAN) and social media.

2. Managing financial and travel arrangements

Know who is booking what. Verify who is booking and paying for travel and hotel. Do you have printed confirmations? Do you know what will be covered, when and for how much? Confirm dietary requirements and other special arrangements.

Tracking receipts and reimbursements. Have an envelope or plastic baggie for all your receipts. Have they sent an expense reimbursement form? Are you aware when expense claims are due?

3. What to bring

Pack light. You may need to move and lift your suitcase more than you expect. Make sure to include your prescription medications with you.

Dress “code.” Dress comfortably, aim for business casual. Consider clothes with pockets for phone and business cards. Hotels are often cold even in summer so have a sweater or shawl with you.

4. During the conference

Network. Plan ahead to meet up with other participants. Make an effort to meet new people – sometimes sit at tables where you don’t know anyone and try talking to the person next to you. Introduce yourself and ask, “How do you fit into healthcare?”. You may be surprised by an amazing conversation and helpful connection. Record contact info for people you meet.

Ask questions. Don’t be reluctant to ask questions! People will respond to your interest in their work especially at the poster displays; the author is standing there to answer any question you might have. They want you to learn about their work, and share your own experiences and insights.

During sessions: Mute your phone during presentations. If the presentation is not meeting your needs, quietly step into the second half of another session. There are usually seats at the front. The presenter will be pleased to have you in the audience, even if your arrival is a short distraction.