

## Views of emergency medicine congress participants' on congress presentations

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### Abstract

**Background and objectives:** Science congresses have begun to be recognized as a tourism model that named as congress tourism. The hotels where the National Emergency Medicine Congresses are hosted, which are held once a year, contribute to congress tourism. The aim of this study is to find out views of attendees of emergency medicine congresses about the congress and presentations.

**Methods:** A survey form consisting of 16 questions (without demographic question) was shared with participants attending the 14th National Emergency Medicine Congress of the Association of Emergency Medicine Specialists (EPAT) by SMS, e-mail, and social media messenger programs (WhatsApp, etc.).

**Results:** A total of 238 participants took part in the study of which 73.9% (n = 176) were male. The age of the majority (68, 28.6%) participants was between 35 to 39 years. Maximum participants (n = 95, 39.9%) were specialist titleholders and the majority's (n = 81, 34.0%) length of service was 6-10 years. Of the total participants, 73.1% and 65% expressed that curiosity about the scientific content and refreshing the knowledge respectively were the reasons for attending the conferences.

**Conclusion:** Even if congresses are held in holiday hotels, participants are more interested in scientific content. Paramedical activities and visuals used in presentations are viewed positively. Although there are very intense programs in the congress, the majority of the participants stated that they would listen to eight presentations most efficiently.

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### Introduction

Congresses are formal gatherings of people with similar businesses or interests that span a few days and allow them to express their ideas [1]. For academics, congresses are not just a scientific or business opportunity, but also a chance to travel [2]. In recent years, congresses have begun to be recognized as a tourist model, and this phenomenon, known as congress tourism, has begun to appeal to attendees in terms of

entertainment, lodging, and vacation [3]. The hotels where the National Emergency Medicine Congresses are hosted, which are held once a year, contribute to congress tourism. Even though subject, hall, and time standardize scientific material, the attendees' overall impressions of the congresses are not reported. The purpose of this study is to find out what attendees of emergency medicine congresses think about the motivations for attending the events and what they think about the congress presentations.

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## Methodology

Hasan Kalyoncu University's ethics committee granted authorization for the study (Date: 20/11/2018 Decision number: 2018/32). The survey study began on April 19, 2019, on the first day of the 14th National Emergency Medicine Congress of the Association of Emergency Medicine Specialists (EPAT), and lasted for 6 (six) months. Gender, age, academic title, and length of service, followed by demographic questions, were all included in the Google Forms survey. There were 16 questions, each with five options, about congress experiences. Participants received surveys via SMS, e-mail, and social media messenger programs (WhatsApp, etc.). On the first page, the participant was asked whether they wanted to take part in the survey. Those who agreed to take part were brought to a page with questions. EPAT provided contact information for the participants. Participants who had attended at least one congress were asked to complete surveys.

**Statistical analysis:** Exact and Pearson Chi-square tests were used to examine the relationships between the independent variables at the categorical measurement level. Categorical variables were given numerical and percentage values as descriptive statistics. For statistical analysis, the SPSS Windows version 24.0-package program was used, and  $p \leq 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

## Results

In total, 238 participants took part in the study. Of the total participants, 73.9% ( $n = 176$ ) were male; the majority of the participants ( $n = 68$ , 28.6 %) were between the ages of 35 and 39. Participation was most common with the title of specialist ( $n = 95$ , 39.9%). Majority's length of service/job was 6-10 years ( $n = 81$ , 34.0%). The academic title and gender of the participants had no relationship ( $p = 0.084$ ). The academic title advanced with the age and duration of the service ( $p < 0.05$ ). Gender, age group, or length of service had no differences ( $p > 0.05$ ). Detail is shown in Table-1.

**Table-1:** Descriptive data of the participants (N=238)

Parameter	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	176	73.9
Female	62	26.1
<b>Age (years)</b>		
25-29	37	15.5
30-34	62	26.1
35-39	68	28.6
40-44	40	16.8
$\geq 45$	30	12.6
<b>Academic title</b>		
Professor - Doctor	6	2.5
Associate Professor - Doctor	34	14.3
Doctoral Lecturer / Assistant Professor - Doctor	48	20.2
Specialist	95	39.9
Research Assistant	37	15.5
General practitioner	8	3.4
Did not specify	10	4.2
<b>Length of service (years)</b>		
0-5	55	23.1
6-10	81	34.0
11-15	48	20.2
16-20	29	12.2
> 20	25	10.5

Table-2: Shows the responses of the participants to the questions.

**Question-1:** What is the most important factor that determines the presentations you entered in the congress? a) The speaker or session chair is your friend/teacher. b) The academic title/career of the speaker. c) The speaker is of foreign nationality. d) Curiosity about the scientific content. e) Other.

In this question, the option (d) was marked by 73.1% participants. Among the different academic titleholders, 94.1% associate professor and those who did not specify marked option (d) while option (a) was marked most (25.3%) by specialist physicians ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Question-2:** What is your purpose for attending the congress? a) Refreshing my knowledge. b) Meeting with your friends. c) Taking a vacation. d) Meeting new local/foreign people. e) Other.

In this question, option (a) was marked most (65.0%). A significant difference was observed between the purpose of attending the congress and the academic title ( $p = 0.001$ ). Associate professors were the ones who pointed the option (b) the most, while the specialist physicians marked the option (d) the most.

**Question-3:** What should be the ideal starting time for the presentations in the congress? a) 8:00 am, b) 8:30 am, c) 09:00 am, d) 09:30 am, e) Other.

In this question, the (c) option was marked the most (54.2%). There were statistically significant ( $p = 0.001$ ) differences regarding the ideal starting hour of the presentations at the congress among the participants having different academic titles. General practitioners, specialists, physician faculty members, and associate professors had a higher rate of opinion compared to the other titleholders about the starting time of 09:00 am.

**Question-4:** What is the most disturbing situation for you in the presentations at the congress? a) Not paying attention to the spelling rules. b) Font size is too small / too large to be seen. c) Written content containing more than half of a slide. d) The number of slides exceeding the number of minutes given. e) Other.

In this question, 48.3% participants marked the option (d). A statistically significant difference was found among the academic titleholders and the answers given ( $p = 0.003$ ). Associate professors marked (c), general practitioners and research assistants marked (d) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-5:** How many presentations can you listen to efficiently and carefully in a day at the congress? a) 1-4, b) 5-8, c) 9-12, d) 13-16, e) Other.

In this question, the most preferred (47.9%) option was (b). There was no statistically significant difference among the academic titleholders and the answers given ( $p = 0.106$ ).

**Question-6:** How many slides in a presentation would allow you to listen more carefully? a) 5-10, b) 11-15, c) 16-20, d) 21-25, e) Other.

In this question, option (c) was marked the most (39.1%). A statistically significant difference was found between the academic title and the answers

given ( $p = 0.001$ ). Associate professors marked (d), general practitioners marked (c), and research assistants marked (b), at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-7:** Which of the following expresses your thoughts about paramedical video, photographs, quotations, etc. in congress presentations? a) I think it distracts me. b) I think it enriches the presentation. c) I consider it an unwarranted action. d) I think it allows the audience to rest in the presentation. e) Other.

In this question, the most preferred (45.4%) option was (b). There was no statistically significant difference between the academic titleholders and the answers given ( $p = 0.194$ ).

**Question-8:** Which of the following expresses your thoughts about medical videos, photographs, quotations, etc. in congress presentations? a) I think it distracts me. b) I think it enriches the presentation. c) I consider it an unwarranted action. d) I think it allows the audience to be heard in the presentation. e) Other.

In this question, (b) was the most preferred option (68.1%). A statistically significant difference was found between the academic titleholders and the answers given ( $p = 0.003$ ). Doctor faculty members and those whose title was not specified marked option (b) at a higher rate compared to the other titleholders.

**Question-9:** Which of the following expresses you best about your speaker preferences at the congress? a) I prefer to listen to speakers with higher academic titles (professor, associate professor). b) I prefer to listen to foreign speakers. c) I prefer to listen if I find the speakers more dynamic. d) I prefer to listen to speakers from different departments. e) Other.

In this question, the most preferred option was (a) and marked by 30.7% participants. There were statistically significant differences between the academic title and the answers given ( $p = 0.001$ ). Associate professors and general practitioners marked option (a) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-10:** Which of the following expresses your opinion about the Turkish presentations,

presentations in English, and oral presentations in many halls at the same time in the congress? a) Having a conversation in several halls at the same time distracts me. b) Speaking in several halls at the same time increases the efficiency of the congress. c) Having a conversation in several halls at the same time causes me to miss important topics and speakers. d) Having a speech in several halls at the same time allows me to switch from one presentation to another in a short time. e) Other.

In this question, 62.6% participants marked the option (c). A statistically significant relationship was observed between the academic title and the answers given ( $p = 0.001$ ). Researchers, specialists, and those whose title was not specified marked (c) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-11:** From which sources do you think the presentations at the congress should be prepared? a) I prefer the presentations to be consisted from classical book information. b) I prefer the presentations to be compiled from classical book information as well as current research. c) I prefer the presentations to be comprised of current research and information rather than classical book information. d) I prefer the presentations to be compiled from the works and experiences of the speaker on the relevant subject, together with current research and information. e) Other.

In this question, the (d) option was marked most (41.2%). There was no statistically significant difference between the academic title and the answers given ( $p = 0.174$ ).

**Question-12:** Which one of the following expresses your opinions if the presentation exceeds the given time? a) If the presentation content is of good quality, it does not distract me from exceeding the time. b) Even if the presentation content is of good quality, it distracts me if the time is exceeded. c) If the presentation time is exceeded, I will consider leaving the hall. d) I think that the speaker is not well prepared if the presentation time exceeds. e) Other.

In this question, option (a) was marked by 57.1% participants. A statistically significant relationship was observed among the different academic titleholders ( $p = 0.001$ ). General practitioners, research assistants, specialists, and physician

faculty members marked option (a) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-13:** In your opinion, what is the ideal place/time to ask questions to speaker about the presentation? a) Immediately after the presentation. b) At the end of all presentations in the session. c) Questions should be taken during the coffee break, not during the session. d) Questions should be given in writing, not verbally. It should be included in the abstract book with its answers. e) Other.

In this question, option (a) was marked most (71%). A statistically significant relationship was observed between the academic titleholders and the answers given ( $p = 0.001$ ). Associate professors, research assistants, and physician faculty members marked option (a) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-14:** In your opinion, which of the following factors is the most responsible for the prolongation of the presentations in the congress? a) The speaker comes unprepared. b) The speaker's slides are long. c) Too many questions on the subject. d) The chairperson of the session is not sensitive about the time. e) Other.

In this question, the most preferred (51.3%) option was (b). A statistically significant relationship was observed between the academic title and the answers given ( $p = 0.001$ ). General practitioners have indicated option (d). Associate professors, research assistants, and specialist physicians marked option (b) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-15:** Which of the following best expresses your opinions about not only medical but also paramedical issues and competitions in congress presentations? a) Paramedical issues and competitions do not interest me. b) I think paramedical subjects and competitions will color the congress. c) I believe that paramedical subjects and competitions reduce the level of the congress. d) I think that paramedical topics and competitions increase cohesion between participants. e) Other.

In this question, the most preferred (47.9%) option was (b). A statistically significant relationship was observed between the academic title and the answers given ( $p = 0.001$ ). Research assistants and

**Table-2:** Survey questions and answers given by the participants (N=238)

Questions	Response options				
	a n (%)	b n (%)	c n (%)	d n (%)	e n (%)
Question1	41 (17.2)	14(5.9)	5(2.1)	174(73.1)	4(1.7)
Question 2	154(65)	18(7.6)	20(8.4)	36(15.2)	9(3.8)
Question 3	2(0.8)	14(5.9)	129(54.2)	74(31.1)	19(8)
Question 4	0(0.0)	23(9.7)	82(34.5)	115(48.3)	18(7.6)
Question 5	90(37.8)	114(47.9)	16(6.7)	4(1.7)	14(5.9)
Question 6	25(10.5)	46(19.3)	93(39.1)	62(26.1)	12(5)
Question 7	14(5.9)	108(45.4)	18(7.6)	95(39.5)	4(1.7)
Question 8	10(4.2)	162(68.1)	4(1.7)	58(24.4)	4(1.7)
Question 9	73(30.7)	46(19.3)	44(18.5)	58(24.4)	17(7.1)
Question 10	10(4.2)	44(18.5)	149(62.6)	33(13.9)	2(0.8)
Question 11	6(2.5)	68(28.6)	64(26.9)	98(41.2)	2(0.8)
Question 12	136(57.1)	46(19.3)	10(4.2)	44(18.5)	2(0.8)
Question 13	169(71)	36(15.1)	15(6.3)	12(5)	6(2.5)
Question 14	74(31.1)	122(51.3)	10(4.2)	24(10.1)	8(3.4)
Question 15	36(15.1)	114(47.9)	19(8)	67(28.2)	2(0.8)
Question 16	19(8)	20(8.4)	74(31.1)	103(43.3)	22(9.2)

specialist physicians marked option (b) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

**Question-16:** How many minutes do you think should be the ideal time for a presentation? Options: a) 5, b) 10, c) 15, d) 20, e) 25 minutes.

In this question, the option (d) was marked most (43.3%). A statistically significant relationship was observed between the academic titleholders and the answers given ( $p = 0.001$ ). General practitioners, physician faculty members, associate professors, and those whose title was not specified marked (d) at a higher rate compared to other titleholders.

There was no difference between gender and the answers given to the questionnaire ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## Discussion

As in many sectors, meetings (congresses, symposiums, conferences, etc.) are organized in the field of medicine/emergency medicine. However, there is not enough data regarding the opinions of the participants in these congresses on the contents of the congresses. Although the number and cost of these meetings, which have an important place in many medical disciplines, are

unclear, an estimate of more than 100 000 medical meetings per year might not be unrealistic, [4]. Although the format of medical conferences has not changed for a long time, there is a lot that participants can do, such as expanding their knowledge, seeking new ideas, meeting new people, participating in social events, dealing with catering and promotions in the exhibition and stand areas [5]. In a medical meeting, which is an effective training method in professional development and maturation, professionals can receive experience transfer from their peers and seniors [6]. At the national and international congresses organized by EPAT every year, there are participants and speakers from many countries [7,8]. It has been determined that the majority of the participants in these congresses, which are enriched with social activities as well as scientific content and held in holiday-concept hotels, are more interested in scientific content than holidays.

Although many medical meetings are enjoyable, they often distract attention because of tiring and busy schedule [7,8]. For example, at the 15th National Emergency Medicine Congress organized by EPAT, there was an intense program in 4 halls, from morning to evening and also included 16-20

presentations daily in each hall, and each presentation lasted approximately 20 minutes [7]. The 16th National Congress was similar, additionally, oral presentations were made in different halls in both congresses [7,8]. Similarly, congresses organized by the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) are full of lectures, courses, panels, and activities that start in more than one field at the same time continue from the early morning until the evening [9]. Unlike congresses with intensive programs, the majority of the participants do not seem to embrace this intensity much. While most of the participants (n = 114, 47.9%) stated that they would listen to 5-8 presentations in a day efficiently, the number of those saying they could listen to 1-4 presentations efficiently, was quite high (n = 90, 37.8%). About 62.6% of the participants stated that having activities and lessons in more than one field at the same time would cause them to miss important topics and speakers.

Although it is for medical purposes, these meetings may include programs aimed at paramedical activities and socialization [7-9]. These activities can be in the form of knowledge competitions, sports tournaments, or music concerts [8, 9]. In our study, 47.9% of the participants expressed a positive opinion that such activities will color the congress. It has been argued that visuals such as photographs, graphics, etc. which are less relevant and unrelated to the subject used in the preparation of the presentation attract the attention of the audience and make the presentation more effective [10,11]. In our study, 68.1% to 45.4% of the participants stated that the visuals with medical and paramedical content respectively enrich the presentations.

## Conclusion

Even if congresses are held in holiday hotels, participants are more interested in scientific content. Paramedical activities and visuals used in presentations are viewed positively. Although there are very intense programs in the congress, the majority of the participants stated that they would listen to 8 presentations most efficiently. It is recommended to utilize these data while organizing congresses or preparing presentations.

**Conflict of interest:** None

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