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The Basics of Medical Meetings

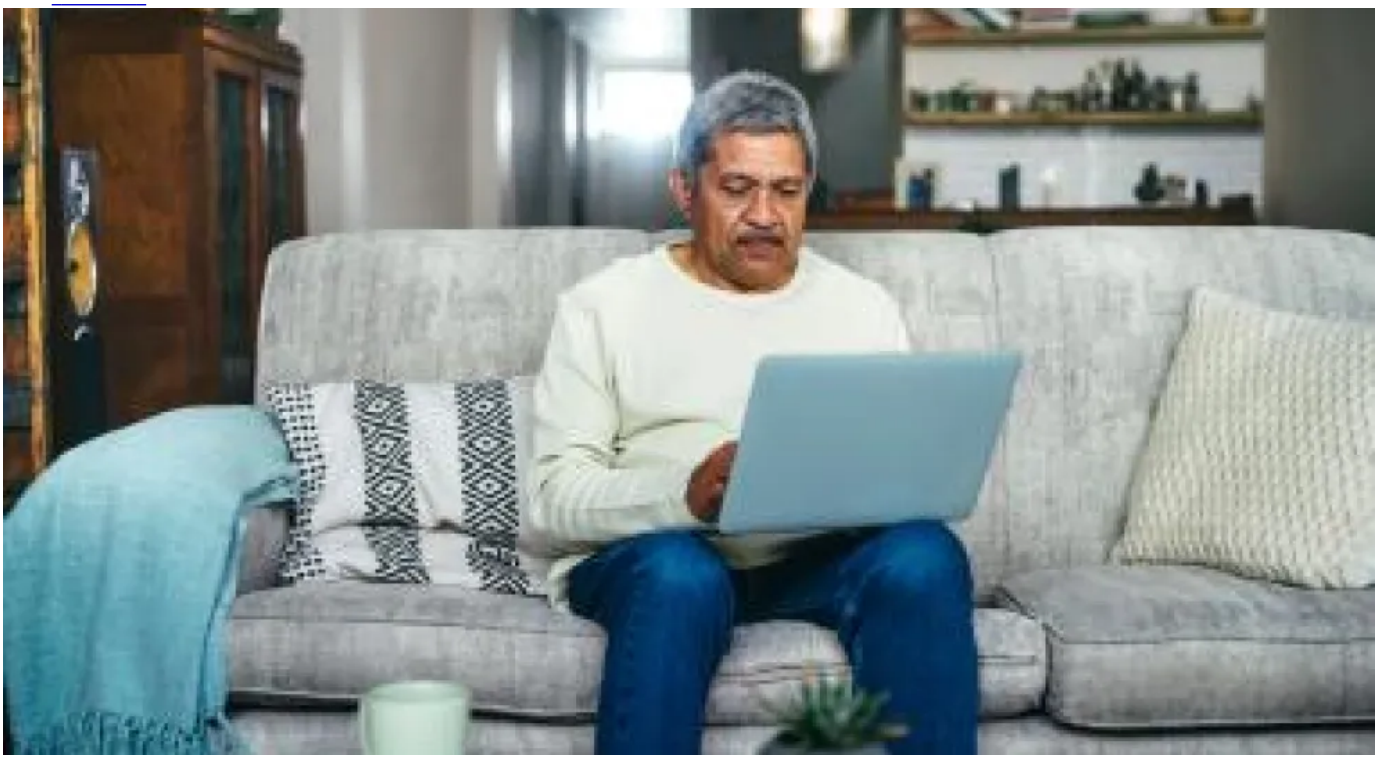
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Medical meetings are large conferences, sometimes referred to as congresses, in which people—typically scientists, researchers, and healthcare professionals—gather to share the latest updates in science and medicine. These meetings provide a chance for people to connect with their colleagues in the field. A medical meeting focused on cancer, also known as an oncology congress, will typically include presentations on the latest research in cancer.

These meetings are hosted by professional organizations (for example, the American Society of Clinical Oncology [ASCO]) and traditionally take place on an annual basis at convention centers, where people travel to attend. Since COVID-19, however, most meetings offer virtual options either in addition or as an alternative to the in-person conference. Virtual options may include online versions of the presentations and other educational sessions that people can watch live or, sometimes, later on their own schedule.

An oncology medical meeting may cover research on all types of cancers, or it may focus on one specific cancer or a group of related cancers. For example, the ASCO Annual Meeting includes research on a wide variety of cancers. The San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium, by contrast, focuses only on research in breast cancer. Finally, the ASCO Gastrointestinal Cancers Symposium includes research on cancers of the colon, pancreas, and other parts of the digestive system.

In addition to the above-mentioned meetings, there are other well-established oncology medical meetings, as shown in the table below. Note that this is not a complete list and that in addition to these key global meetings, many other cancer-related conferences offer important information.

Medical Meeting	**Examples of Cancer(s) Discussed**	**Typical Timing***
American Association for Cancer Research (AACR)	Multiple cancer types	April
American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)	Multiple cancer types	June
ASCO Gastrointestinal Cancers (ASCO GI)	Gastrointestinal cancers including cancers of the pancreas, esophagus, stomach, rectum, colon, and liver	January

ASCO Genitourinary Cancers (ASCO GU)	Genitourinary cancers including cancers of the kidney, bladder, urethra, prostate, testes, adrenal glands, and penis	February
American Society of Hematology (ASH)	Cancers of the blood including leukemia, lymphoma, myelodysplastic syndromes, and multiple myeloma	December
American Urological Association (AUA)	Urologic cancers including cancers of the prostate, testes, bladder, and penis	April/May
European Hematology Association (EHA)	Cancers of the blood including leukemia, lymphoma, myelodysplastic syndromes, and multiple myeloma	June
European Association of Urology (EAU)	Urologic cancers including cancers of the prostate, testes, bladder, and penis	March
European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO)	Multiple cancer types	September/October
European Society for Medical Oncology, Breast Cancer (ESMO BC)	Breast cancer	May
European Society for Medical Oncology, Gastrointestinal Cancers (ESMO GI)	Gastrointestinal cancers including cancers of the pancreas, esophagus, stomach, colon, and liver	June/July
San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS)	Breast cancer	December
World Conference on Lung Cancer (WCLC)	Lung cancer	August/September

*These are the typical month(s) each meeting is held; exact dates vary by year.

As mentioned, people who attend oncology medical conferences typically have scientific or medical backgrounds, such as scientists, physicians, and other healthcare professionals. However, people living with cancer, caregivers, patient advocates, and others who may not have a scientific background are now attending these meetings more often to learn firsthand about the latest updates in cancer care and to connect with each other. In fact, some medical meetings offer programs for people living with cancer to present their own research and to give their perspective on their experiences with cancer, allowing an open dialogue between the patient and healthcare communities. Recent meetings to include this type of program include those hosted by EAU and JADPRO.

Similarly, people with cancer and those without scientific backgrounds can now occasionally find resources that help to explain data being presented at medical meetings in simplified language. One example is a recently published, Pfizer-sponsored podcast hosted by a patient advocate and a physician that covers the 2021 ESMO Annual Meeting. The podcast focuses on bladder and kidney cancer data from the meeting as well as other patient-centric topics, including the emergence of the patient voice in research, the importance of patient involvement at scientific congresses, and the impact of COVID-19 on cancer care.

Plain language summaries are simplified summaries of research so people living with cancer can stay informed. Plain language summaries of abstracts, or a summary of the research, presented at medical meetings are called abstract plain language summaries (APLS). APLS are intended for people with or without medical backgrounds and use simple images, plain language, and consistent terminology to help explain the research presented at medical meetings. They do not include additional contextual information that a full research presentation may include. Ask your doctor or healthcare team any questions you may have regarding information discussed in an APLS or any data presented at medical meetings. Learn more about APLS here.

Attending a medical meeting, whether in person or virtually, can be valuable in keeping up with the latest in cancer care. With the information learned from medical meetings in hand, people with cancer may be able to have more informed conversations with their oncologists and healthcare team. Medical meetings also

offer a way to connect with other people with cancer and share common experiences. Ask your doctor or healthcare team if a specific medical meeting may be right for you to explore.