

## **UC San Diego**

### **Spring 2022 - UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing: Pandemic Reflections**

#### **Title**

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#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5bb9r469>

#### **Journal**

UC San Diego Health Journal of Nursing, 15(1)

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#### **Publication Date**

2022-04-01

Peer reviewed

# Transitioning to a Virtual Nursing Research Conference: An Example of Enduring Disruptive Change

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For 12 years the UC San Diego Health (UCSDH) Nursing Research and Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Council held an annual Nursing Innovation and Inquiry Conference in a hotel setting with between 100 to 200 attendees. Participants were internal and external to the health system. The fee to attend covered the cost of food, hotel facilities, and audiovisual services. Despite restrictions placed on social gatherings due to the pandemic, Council members were determined to recognize nursing advancements and promote achievements in evidence-based practice, quality improvement, and research. They were also committed to preserving the highly praised annual art exhibit, which were composed of translations of research findings into various forms of art created by nurses and others in the local community. Even though all other regional and national conferences were canceled during this time period, the Council transitioned the conference to a virtual platform, which allowed the nursing community to participate in this time-honored tradition. The UCSDH Nursing Research and EBP Council hosted the first virtual conference in July 2020 after only three months of conversion planning. Another virtual conference was held in June 2021.

The conference was transitioned to a virtual platform at a time when most nurses had rarely used virtual technology at a technical level. The biggest challenge with the conversion to a virtual conference was educating

nurse presenters on how to record their presentations and utilize Zoom at a sophisticated level as a panelist. Since the presenters needed to learn how to use Zoom in the middle of an extremely stressful pandemic, training needed to be as simple as possible. The presenters were coached using step-by-step instructional videos, one-on-one technical support, and dress rehearsals. During dress rehearsal, all presenters practiced accessing the system, using their microphone and muting, turning on video, optimal lighting, and how to answer audience questions. Although utilizing electronic platforms to host a conference was new to the Council members and most attendees, it proved to be an effective form of showcasing nursing project results, research, art, and achievements.

The three main components of planning a compelling virtual conference include selecting a viable platform to allow for a sizable number of guests, maintaining audience interactivity, and creating connections by pairing prerecorded presentations with live question and answer (Q&A) rounds. The Zoom webinar platform was selected because it allowed sharing recorded presentations with live Q&A. A hyperlinked conference syllabus allowed attendees to read the presenters' work in detail and visualize full page reproductions of artwork accompanied by abstracts. Mentimeter interactive games, polls, and quizzes were used to keep the audience engaged in the conference. Launching the organization's first virtual nursing conference on this scale involved different subspecialties of nursing within UCSDH. The virtual format allowed an increased amount of nurses from more



**Jessica Bejar, BSN, RN, PCCN** has worked for UCSDH since 2016 and recently transitioned from progressive care to outpatient palliative radiation oncology. She is originally from the East San Francisco Bay Area and during the pandemic, she has loved having time to garden, cook, and play endless games of fetch with her energetic doodle puppy, Penelope.

departments than ever to participate. Further, the virtual platform made it possible for nurses to attend for partial credits if they could not attend the entire day, which has never been offered in the past. Finally, coming together to celebrate nursing achievements and advances despite the global pandemic gave UCSDH nurses a deep sense of fulfillment and pride in working at an organization that provides care and specialty services to the community.

The Nursing Research and EBP Council is very proud to be able to provide a platform for nurses to showcase their hard work and pursuit of providing the best care for patients.



**Lilian Chan, MSN, RN, PCCN-K** is a Nurse Informaticist for UCSDH's Information Systems department. Lilian has worked for UCSDH since 2017 and initially worked as a clinical nurse on 5 West Trauma PCU for 5West: Trauma PCU. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Lilian enjoys hiking and the beautiful outdoors of San Diego with her two dogs, Tofu and Miso.



**Judy E. Davidson, DNP, RN, MCCM, FAAN** serves as nurse scientist for the University of California San Diego Health. In this role she supports nurses with project development, research protocol development, presentation and publication skills.

## 2021: Conference Medium Vote

Answer	%	Count
Another Virtual Conference	61.42	121
A No Charge Conference on Campus	23.35	46
Move Back to a Hotel with Registration Fee	15.23	30
Total	100	197

The presentations of projects developed during the pandemic was further evidence of the resilient nature of UCSDH nurses. Each presentation was replete with innovative approaches to care, worthy of adoption by others and acknowledgment from peers. In fact, a special session was held so that nurses who had been accepted to speak at other canceled conferences could present their work at the UCSDH conference to preserve the dissemination of new knowledge. Nurse educators from other organizations attended the conference and requested advice from the Council for virtual conversion of their own programs. The method of conference planning and presentation was adopted by the San Diego County-wide Evidence-Based Practice Institute. Since all the presentations were recorded, the Research and EBP Council had a new opportunity to offer access to the conference throughout the year through on-demand sessions. Nurses can register to watch pre-recorded sessions by the conference panelists on the first day of every month through the internal UCSDH nursing education calendar. Through on-demand access, nurses can view the conference and earn free continuing education credits at their convenience. Lastly, with the success of the transition, and multiple requests for step-by-step instructions on how to replicate the process, a manuscript

was prepared and published in *Creative Nursing*.

Using technology at this level requires time and skill. To sustain the program into the future, the Nursing Research and EBP Council created a permanent Technology Chair position in the Council's elected leadership to facilitate the virtual conference format, as well as other council events. Disruptive innovation is a term used for change caused by necessity. Disruptive innovation can become an enduring change when the new process ends up better than the previous practice. After the virtual conferences in 2020 and 2021, the Nursing Research and EBP Council asked for feedback from participants. Each year, the nurse attendees overwhelmingly voted to keep the virtual format rather than reverting back to an in person conference. Their decision was likely a result of several factors including public health concerns, the convenience of being able to attend from home, the new option of partial continuing education credits, and cost savings. Innovation remains a core value within the UCSDH professional practice model, and the enthusiasm shown for transitioning the conference to a virtual platform was a clear indication that UCSDH nurses truly value evidence-based practice and champion innovation.

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