

# Amplifying Patient and Caregiver Voices in Academic Conferences: Reflections From a Conference on Integrated Care

Natasha Y. Sheikhan, Terrence Ho, Philiz Goh, Yinka Macaulay, Sylvia Urbanik, Walter Wodchis and Jodeme Goldhar

**TABLE 1.**  
Inclusive and accessible practices for conferences

| Category                              | Common Barriers                                                                    | Practices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Registration                          | Cost of registration                                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waiving the cost of registration fees for patients and caregivers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                        |
|                                       | No patient-/caregiver-specific registration counter                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having a registration counter for special assistance</li> <li>Asking if attendees need any disability accommodations</li> </ul>                                                                                                     |
|                                       | For people with mobility issues, difficulties with standing during long wait times | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Having chairs at registration counters</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                       | Barriers to wheelchair access during registration                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making sure signs are high and easily visible</li> <li>Arranging for lower desks to accommodate those in wheelchairs</li> <li>Ensuring enough room for wheelchairs/walkers to manoeuvre around the registration desk</li> </ul>     |
| Promotion, invitations and technology | Information inaccessible to those with visual or hearing impairment                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using larger fonts</li> <li>Using captioned promotional videos</li> <li>Using signage that is easy to see</li> <li>Using an accessible conference app (e.g., dark mode, high contrast, font size)</li> </ul>                        |
|                                       | Unclear instructions and language barriers in conference promotions/invitations    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information about accessibility features or accommodations available to attendees with a map</li> <li>Contact information and how to register caregiver information</li> <li>Orientation package for patients/caregivers</li> </ul> |

| Category              | Common Barriers                                                                   | Practices                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Venue                 | Not inclusive venues (e.g., not wheelchair accessible)                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair accessible seating, including stage ramps</li> <li>• Quiet rooms for those who need to take a break</li> <li>• Scent-free space</li> <li>• Adjustable lighting in venues</li> <li>• Clear floor spaces (e.g., no cords or trip hazards)</li> <li>• Functioning accessible doors</li> <li>• Easy to read signage that is jargon-free</li> <li>• Wide aisles for wheelchairs and walkers</li> <li>• Spaces at tables without chairs, with a table height that fits wheelchairs</li> <li>• Spaces to store walkers around the seating area</li> <li>• Chairs with and without armrests to help those with difficulty getting up</li> <li>• Front seats reserved for those with disabilities</li> <li>• Relief area for service animals with water bowls</li> </ul> |
| Food                  | Difficult to navigate buffets, allergen risks and dietary needs not met           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food, drinks and utensils are easy to reach for people with wheelchairs</li> <li>• Bendable straws and cups with handles for those with limited use of their hands</li> <li>• Buffet tables that are not too high</li> <li>• Volunteers available to offer assistance</li> <li>• Clear labels on foods to identify allergens or food sensitivities</li> <li>• Water stations</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Presentation delivery | Presentation spaces are not accessible                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share accessibility tips with presenters, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Using microphones, with roaming microphones available</li> <li>› Describing images on the screen for the visually impaired</li> <li>› Using plain language</li> <li>› Texts on slides that are no smaller than 24 points</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Well-lit rooms</li> <li>• Clear line of sight for ASL</li> <li>• Accessible stage podium, including ramps with railing onto the stage</li> <li>• Copies of the presentation slides are available</li> <li>• Breaks built into conference schedule</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                       | Patient and caregiver voices are regularly excluded from conference presentations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patient and caregiver keynote presentation</li> <li>• Research is co-presented with patient and/or caregiver partners</li> <li>• Most sessions are co-chaired by patients/caregivers</li> <li>• Land acknowledgements</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Volunteers            | Lack of assistance in conferences                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volunteers who can resolve accessibility barriers</li> <li>• A table where patients/caregivers can go for support</li> <li>• Identifiable and trained volunteers across spaces</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Transportation        | Lack of accessible transit                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-conference information on accessible options</li> <li>• Vans for wheelchairs and accessible taxis available</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Community building    | No spaces to meet patient and caregiver peers                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops and network events specific for patients and caregivers</li> <li>• Spaces to connect on the conference app</li> <li>• Badges that identify patients and caregivers, with a choice to self-identify</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |