HIV2020 Global Conference Canceled Because of COVID-19

Alternatives for the event, originally slated for July in Mexico City, are being discussed.

March 27, 2020 By Trent Straube

HIV2020, the international conference planned for July in Mexico City, has been canceled because of COVID-19 concerns, the organizers announced on HIV2020.org.

“The Mexican government has suspended large events and gatherings through August and possibly beyond,” the statement reads. “The organizers of HIV2020 prioritize above all else the health and safety of our communities. We cannot overstate the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

COVID-19 is the potentially fatal lung disease caused by the novel coronavirus that is spreading across the globe. Among those at risk for severe illness are older people, those with other health conditions and people with compromised immune systems.

The HIV2020 logo

“HIV2020 organizers are still exploring alternatives to a face-to-face meeting,” the statement continues. “This may include virtual sessions (i.e., prerecorded keynote addresses from leaders in the field, livestreamed panel presentations led by community advocates and community-led service providers, and virtual discussion rooms) aligned with the HIV2020 themes of affinity, intersectionality and solidarity. Alternatives to a face-to-face meeting will most certainly shine a spotlight on the critical role communities have and must continue to play in the global HIV response.”

The organizers highlight that all paid HIV2020 registrants will be reimbursed and that more information will be available in the near future.

The conference was scheduled to run at the same time as the first half of the International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2020) planned for San Francisco and neighboring Oakland. AIDS 2020 organizers announced March 27 that in light of COVID-19, that conference would be virtual.

AIDS 2020, which is organized by the International AIDS Society (IAS), takes place every other year in a different city across the globe.

Why have two competing conferences? In short, when it was announced nearly two years ago that San Francisco would be the home of the 2020 event, a group of activists felt that the conference should be moved off U.S. soil because of the country’s discriminatory immigration and travel policies. When IAS refused to change course, activists launched HIV2020 with the goal of highlighting the often-overlooked communities affected by HIV.

For background information on the two conferences, see “AIDS 2020 vs. HIV2020.” And earlier this year POZ published an interview with George Ayala, founding executive director of MPact Global Action for Gay Men’s Health and Rights, which is one of the organizers of the HIV2020. To read that Q&A, see “Positive Response.”

In related COVID-19 news, keep in mind that novel coronavirus guidance and concerns for unique populations may vary. For example, see “3 Reasons COVID-19 Poses a Higher Risk for the LGBTQ Population,” “UPDATED: What People With HIV Need to Know About the New Coronavirus” and the similar article for people with cancer.

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