Making Decisions About USCHA 2021

Would you attend the 2021 United States Conference on HIV/AIDS in person? NMAC seeks your input!

March 2, 2021 By Paul Kawata

My COVID lockdown dream was about the 2021 United States Conference on HIV/AIDS (USCHA). We were meeting in person, but some attendees refused to wear masks. Since being vaccinated, they resented being told what to do. While happy to see and hug everyone, NMAC is very concerned that USCHA not become another super spreader event. It will ultimately be a discussion about reasonable risks and there are no final decisions about the 2021 conference. 2022 is still scheduled to be in Puerto Rico!

Here is our current thinking: September is too early for an in-person meeting. The Marriott Marquis in Washington DC is willing to postpone USCHA until Oct 28 - 31. Like all DC hotels, they have no idea if they will be fully open in the fall. Option two is to pivot to another virtual conference around the same time. Our preference is to meet in person, but it's too early to make that decision.

NMAC is fighting for vaccine justice. We would never hold a meeting until all communities have access to the vaccine. What happens after that date is still very unclear. We think everyone will have access this summer, but it's not enough for herd immunity. Does life in America need herd immunity to hold meetings? Would you be willing to travel after you are vaccinated, but before herd immunity in America? These are complex questions without clear answers right now.

Nobody wants to be the first in-person meeting and everyone wants life to get back to normal, to travel and see family. When this happens depends on the speed, efficiency, and uptake of the vaccines. These are variables with no answers at this time and so we wait.

Our explanation is not satisfying, but it's the truth. We want to see the world and be safe. Conferences and meetings probably cannot require attendees to get vaccinated. At the same time, travel is unsafe without one. Vaccinations are essential until there is world-wide herd immunity. Some experts think we will never reach that point. There are too many variables outside of our control. Tell us what you think. Is it OK to meet in person if everyone has access to the vaccines? Do conferences need to wait for herd immunity? What happens if the world never gets herd immunity?

As we make this decision, we want to hear from you. Please complete this survey to let us know what you're thinking. Would you attend USCHA in person? Would you take the vaccine if you could? Your feedback will help us in our process.

Yours in the struggle,

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and

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