The coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic has changed how we do things, and AMWA’s premier event, the annual Medical Writing & Communication Conference, is no exception. In a member survey conducted over the summer, respondents overwhelmingly stated they were hesitant to travel or attend a large conference in 2020. Because of this feedback, this year, our annual conference will be held virtually, with conference dates of Tuesday, October 20, through Thursday, October 22. Although I am disappointed that I won’t be able to see friends and colleagues in person, I am excited about the opportunities a virtual event provides.

A virtual conference provides a greener, more accessible event for more of our members while allowing us to continue to deliver the same outstanding professional development opportunities for medical communicators and editors. AMWA has worked hard to identify a virtual conference platform that supports the valued components of our traditional conference: education and networking.

Educational opportunities will include concurrent education sessions (which are analogous to our traditional open sessions) and plenary sessions (which are analogous to our traditional general sessions). I applaud our presenters, who have had to adjust to a new format, new logistics, and new technology. I am looking forward to these sessions.

Networking opportunities will include real-time (“live”) discussion groups, which will encompass both educational/informative discussions (which are similar to our traditional roundtables) and networking groups. These live discussion groups are your opportunities to connect with your peers and chat about topics of interest to you all. In addition, you will be able to access the virtual conference platform approximately 1 week before the conference to set up a networking profile—your calling card, if you will. Use it to connect with others.

The week before the conference, you will be able to access welcome videos and bonus educational content. Conference registrants will be able to access sessions after the conference. If you can’t decide which educational session to attend during a given time slot, you won’t miss it entirely—the content will be recorded and available for on-demand viewing later.

The schedule (see https://www.amwa.org/general/custom.asp?page=at_a_glance) was developed to support participation across time zones in the United States as well as the United Kingdom and Europe. It was designed to be consistent each day so attendees can manage their schedules more easily, whether they plan on taking time off to attend the conference or will be alternating between working and attending sessions.

Even though online delivery of educational content is not new to AMWA, with the 2020 Medical Writing & Communication Conference, we are preparing to expand our virtual presence while continuing to deliver outstanding content. Although the format of the conference will be different, we again have an excellent lineup of presenters and programming. Please join me as we enter this brave new world of virtual conferencing. Registration information is available at https://www.amwa.org/event/2020annualconf. See you online!

Elise Eller, PhD / Chair, Annual Conference Program Committee

Conference registrants will be able to access sessions after the conference.