

My Experience at the American Psychiatric Association 2023 in San Francisco

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Journal For International Medical Graduates

Abstract

This article provides a personal account of my experiences during the 178th Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) held in San Francisco, highlighting key sessions, tracks, and interactions with professionals from around the world. The meeting commenced with an inspiring opening session by the APA President, Dr. Rebecca Brendel. The conference featured an extensive poster presentation hall, offering opportunities for collaboration, idea-sharing, and discussions. This article also mentions the different tracks implemented by Dr. Eric Williams, along with insights from the Resident Fair organized by the APA, which enabled attendees to engage in one-on-one interactions with program directors and residents. This article serves as a reflection on my experiences, underscoring the significance of collaboration, diversity, and resilience within the psychiatric profession. I express gratitude to fellow attendees and draw inspiration from their work, reinforcing my commitment to work diligently and persistently toward personal and professional growth.

Keywords: APA meeting, Psychiatry, Residency, IMG, Mental Health, Diversity.

Introduction

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), founded in 1844 is one of the major conferences for psychiatric practice, education, and advocacy for nearly two centuries. It is set to be one of the dedicated meetings for promoting the highest quality care for individuals with mental illnesses and it is also set to bring together psychiatrists, researchers, educators, graduates, students, and allied professionals to encourage collaboration along with sharing knowledge and shaping the future for mental healthcare. This year's scientific meeting promised to be a remarkable platform for

In the exhibitor hall, there were more than 200 exhibitors for endorsements, career expo, publishers book expo, and mind and body pavilion.

One thing I would like to appreciate is the different tracks for this meeting, which were implemented by Dr. Rebecca Brendel along with Scientific Program Committee (SPC) chair Dr. Eric Williams and catered to various interests and backgrounds. The different tracks consisted of the International Medical Graduate (IMG) track, research track, diversity and equity and inclusion track, technology track, resident's fellows, and medical Student track. Being an IMG, the one track I could relate to and that caught my attention was the IMG track, which was beautifully designed. This track had several important pieces of information, like giving IMGs tips and tricks to do by program directors, challenges for IMGs in psychiatry in 2023, supporting IMGs throughout their careers, and IMGs in American psychiatry: past, present, and future. These sessions facilitated discussions on the unique experience of IMGs and provided guidance and resources.

Also, at the medical student residency fair organized by the APA, various institutions across the United States, along with their program directors and residents, were talking about their programs and answering questions. It gave an opportunity for one-on-one interactions where we asked program-related queries, like IMG-friendly programs and incoming postgraduate year (PGY) -1 IMG residents at their program. The biggest takeaway I had was learning that we must choose a program that selects you for who you are and where you come from. The program you select for residency should be a fit for your personality, diversity, and your future goals, whether it's on the academic end with research or clinical practice, or community outreach.

scientific discussion along with breakthrough research presentations, and vital discussions that are needed to address the pressing challenges and opportunities facing the mental health community. Over the course of this conference, I witnessed a good array of scientific sessions, lectures, exhibit halls, and poster presentations that covered a wide spectrum of medical specialties. It ranged from clinical practice and research to healthcare policy, medical education, medical student residency fair, information for international medical graduates, and digital health which provide a platform for thought-provoking conversations. It also included evidence-based practices and the latest discoveries that are happening right now in the field of medicine along with how to shape the future of medicine. Conferences like these help us embrace the spirit of collaboration, unity, and excellence that defines conferences like APA and work towards creating a healthier, more equitable, diverse, and compassionate mental healthcare system.

Body

The 178th Annual Meeting of the APA was held on May 20-24, 2023, after COVID, in San Francisco with the theme Innovation, Collaboration, Motive (1). In its true sense, it was my first experience in the United States attending an APA meeting where I connected with people with the scope of collaboration on future projects while learning about psychopharmacology, psychotherapy, substance use disorder, and neuroscience.

Commencing the meeting, Dr. Rebecca Brendel, President of the APA meeting, had an opening session discussing the future vision to continue advancing mental health and working for members who face discrimination and inequity within the profession. Dr. Rebecca's journey, in a true sense, was inspiring and motivating to everyone in the hall. I got the opportunity to interact with psychiatrists who attended meetings from different parts of the world. It was also announced that Dr. Petros Levounis will be starting as the new President of the Association starting in June this year, and the next APA meeting for 2024 will be held in New York.

There were over 1000 posters presented in the poster presentation hall. We had an opportunity to see and discuss a few posters and engage in conversation, asking questions, and exchanging insights as a platform for collaborating ideas. The meeting had over 600 peer-reviewed sessions and courses, providing a comprehensive platform for learning and professional development.

In this meeting, I got inspired by the stories of speakers, residents, attendees, and the program directors. Every one of them had a journey different from each other but had the same goals that make the difference. I recollect having many conversations, but one with Dr. Vikas Gupta stood out. He addressed every one of us as his colleagues, saying we will all match into residency, maybe not this year but next year or the year after that, but we will all be his future colleagues, boosting my confidence. I also interacted with Dr. Sadiq Naveed, discussing the rate of matching into Psychiatry as an IMG, and asked for his thoughts on this. He replied with a question, asking me how many spots I need to get into residency, to which I replied one, making me realize I just need one spot to get into residency. Their words of encouragement and insights into the residency matching process as an IMG served to boost my confidence and reaffirm the importance of persistence in me.

Additionally, as many conversations were inspiring, meeting fellow applicants on the same journey to residency displayed everyone's commitment and hard work toward their professional goals. I would like to wish good luck to fellow applicants applying for this cycle.

Reference

1. APA Annual meeting May 20-24, 2023, San Francisco Guide.