

# Patients in a digital world: digital engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed patients' lives and created challenges that could never have been anticipated. Patient representatives were asked about their **experience** with **digital engagement during COVID-19** and asked to vote on the most **positive** and **negative** aspects of this.



**Positive experiences of digital engagement** included an increase in virtual communications, rapid creation of new resources and a dramatic increase in social media use.<sup>1</sup>



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*The positive impact of these digital tools has been that they help patients get the right information from specialists without creating confusion.*

Europa Donna Albania, Albania

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## The most positive aspects of digital engagement<sup>2</sup>



**29%** Maintaining continuity of care

**28%** Having virtual access to advice and support from health professionals digitally

**15%** Staying informed

**11%** Being in control and empowered

**9%** Connecting with family, friends and peers

**8%** Minimising the risk of a potential COVID-19 infection

## Positive experiences of patient advocates with digital engagement during COVID-19<sup>3</sup>





**Negative experiences of digital engagement** included struggling with loneliness, lack of access or understanding on how to use digital tools and missed human interaction.<sup>1</sup>



### The most negative aspects of digital engagement<sup>4</sup>



- 35%** Having less face to face interactions and/or time with health professionals
- 18%** Health professionals resisting the use of digital tools
- 16%** Unable to use technology properly
- 12%** Lack/limited access to the infrastructure (e.g. internet, smart devices etc)
- 12%** Inability to access certain services/support digitally
- 7%** Issues with data sharing, interoperability and privacy

### Negative experiences of patient advocates with digital engagement during COVID-19<sup>5</sup>



*The biggest challenge has been having to over-rely on online platforms which can cause fatigue. The lack of human interaction has also been difficult for some people living alone.*

**Migraine Association of Ireland (MAI), Ireland**



### Where to next for digital engagement?

At the EPIS 2020 Summit, **84%** of participants agreed and/or strongly agreed that **the benefits of digital engagement for patients far outweigh the disadvantages.**



**Furthermore, 7.98 was the average rating** given by patient advocates on their experience of using digital technologies during COVID-19.

1 – Not at all positive / 10 – Extremely positive

#### Footnotes

**1.** EPIS (2020), Patients in a digital world: Three questions on digital engagement and solutions during the COVID-19 pandemic <<https://www.episummit.net/resources.html>> **2.** These results are based on the polling from 130 patient community representatives participating in the voting during the EPIS 2020 Summit, 5th November 2020. **3.** This word cloud was created via the 88 word entries received from patient community representatives participating in the voting during the EPIS 2020 Summit, 5th November 2020. **4.** These results are based on the polling from 139 patient community representatives participating in the voting during the EPIS 2020 Summit, 5th November 2020. **5.** This word cloud was created via the 94 word entries received from patient community representatives participating in the voting during the EPIS 2020 Summit, 5th November 2020.

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