

NANP Conference Report Norfolk October 1998

Questionnaires

I have divided the answers into

- 1) Good or very good, approve or strongly approve (formerly 1 and 2)
- 2) Neutral/indifferent/no opinion (formerly 3)
- 3) Poor or very poor, disapprove or strongly disapprove (formerly 4 and 5)

The great majority of delegates completed the evaluation forms, but some questions were left unanswered. The percentages relate to the proportion answered in each question, rather than the total number of forms or delegates, and are rounded to the nearest single percentage point. A few delegates put the numbers in the "wrong way" ie assigning "5" rather than "1" for strong approval, but these were corrected, on inspection, on those who assigned, in contrast, "1" or "2" to the keynote speech question, or who's free comments contradicted the number assigned. I have put a selection of relevant comments offering valid criticism or suggestion, but there were **very many more kind and appreciative comments** on all items and questions which I have not put in. (Except there were no appreciative comments on the keynote speech question)

Conference organisation 1) 98% 2) 2% 3) nil

delegates' comments

"Sunday Question time should have been in City suite" "Too many meetings ran late-spouse fixed to collect at fixed time" "For late delegates, tea and coffee would have been nice" "Prefer not to have to walk through delegates when arriving" "poor signposting, and frustrating to have to go over to the other hotel" "maybe those arriving by car only (to be) away from main hotel" "House everyone in the main hotel" "Start mid morning and finish mid afternoon, and longer time before evening dinner" "More activities for spouses - especially after checking out on Sunday at 11am" "More formal arrangements for Saturday morning" "Speakers from floor need mikes too" "Please can people learn to use microphones properly" "Sound systems poor" "Workshops too close"

My comment

Delegates were very kind and appreciative despite the several niggles as above, perhaps they knew who would be looking at the forms and didn't want to hurt his feelings ! (I can take it). It was impossible to assign a room to any particular delegate because I wanted to ensure as many families could come as possible, and the fact that we had a split site was always going to be a problem (see comment on venue). Not having City Suite on Sunday is a sore point; we had already booked it but were told in April that it had been double booked, and by that time it was too late to find an alternative venue; and we were determined to do the conference. Late arrivals could have entered at the registration end, there was no need to check in, and registration was manned until 2pm; (The posted directions clearly indicated this, so "not guilty" to that one !) But yes, it would have been nice for drinks for late arrivals, and for those taking lunch, and I think the hotel should have been more flexible on checking out, especially as they *knew* that delegates were staying the 24 hours. Sign posting was insufficient, there simply wasn't time to do enough (I only

started on them on Friday afternoon, and the NANP logo is in MSWord which runs very slowly on my Mac, and which I find much more irritating and slower to use than MacOS applications). Sorry.

Publicity 1) 82% 2) 10% 3) 8%

comments

"need better advertising aimed at NPs" "I heard about it because I'm on LMC, no other route?" "Only heard of it through NANP" "comics could have covered it more"

My comment

Publicity can be very expensive, and we were starting from a budget of Nil. We wrote to ALL post graduate Deans twice, asking them to publicise it, and to all NP group coordinators. All members rejoining in April were asked if they wanted details. It was mentioned twice in successive NANP newsletters and on the web page. We promoted the conference at the Registrar's national conference and at the East Anglia registrar's conference. We paid for one advert in the BMJ and it was mentioned in careers focus. We sent out approximately 750 application packs, on request. I had a spread in Doctor newspaper in July, and Doctor placed full page adverts in about 8 editions (and in fact we got quite a few new members and delegates from these adverts). As Doctor was a contributing sponsor, the other comics weren't terribly interested until the last minute.

Sponsorship 1) 86% 2) 11% 3) 3%

comments

"A bit heavy" "Anxious about what Maurice said, I'd prefer NANP was independent from Healthcall" "Do not commit NANP to any closer links with Healthcall" "I was not happy at his presence at most of the conference" "Disappointed that Healthcall were given such a prominent place in the conference" "Shame all the stands packed up at teatime - difficult to get round them all" "Why did they (the stands) go so early" "Was really sorry the trade stands left so early"

My comment

Without doubt, we could not have done the conference without considerable sponsorship, as can be seen from the balance sheet. Without sponsorship, the fees would have been more than double. We are aware of the suspicion shared by many delegates of Healthcall, and we will need to bear this in mind. Despite a certain incorrect statement at QT, may I reassure you that there is absolutely no "official" sponsorship or any influence on policy or direction made by Healthcall, or any other commercial organisation, and Mr Henchey's views and suggestions were already well known to NANP Council. There were no complaints about Glaxo having at least as much coverage as Healthcall, but both are commercial organisations with an interest in what GPs do. Yes, I was disappointed that the reps left early; I know them all very well, and managed to speak to most of them before they left. Unanimously, they said they had their money's worth before lunch and were amazed by the interest and approachability of our delegates, and couldn't believe that there was anyone left who wanted to see them. (This is absolutely true). Obviously an hour's tea break would have been better, they would have stayed. I'm sure we can use "my"

local reps to influence their colleagues in whatever region we choose to hold the next one. If we hold one. We need to raise about £15000 minimum.

Fees 1)89% 2)10% 3) 1%

comments

"more local HA support would encourage more to come"

My comment

I think most delegates appreciated that the fees were subsidised, and that the fees were just about right

Quality of Venue 1)79% 2)15% 3)6%

comments

"Not enough fluids to drink" "I heard the sports hotel was not good" "Good, but Norwich is a long way away" "Sport village very much poorer accommodation" "No drinking water readily available" "Norwich very difficult to get to" "Sound was a problem; noisy air conditioning" "I have been to many worse venues" "Rabbit warren, need better signs" "Ideally all staying at conference venue" "Mould on breakfast toast" "Sport village a bit grotty" "Smelly rooms at Sports Hotel" "Distance to Sport Village in rain" "No coffee on arrival" "Sport village hotel OK....for the price" "A bit pokey" "Except for Sport village accommodation"

My comment

A decision to go for Conference 98 was made by Council in early February, at a time when we really didn't know if we were going to get re-joiners following the membership fee rise. We needed three vital ingredients for the conference to be "go". 1) A venue that we could reasonably afford and was available 2) A reasonable chance of sufficient local sponsorship 3)Someone prepared to organise it at such short notice. Absolutely nothing was planned by that time and I hadn't got a clue how to organise a conference, and we couldn't afford an Events company to do it for us. Because Norwich could deliver on 1 and 2, I became no 3 ! The Jarvis is the biggest hotel with conference facilities in Norwich, and the Sport Village, although grotty, was close and had the facilities and, lets face it, wasn't very expensive. In fact, I was pleasantly surprised how good the Jarvis turned out to be. No drinking water at lunch and during the day was a definite oversight, sorry.

Choice of workshops 1)83% 2)14% 3)3%

comments

"wanted to know which (medical web)sites to visit and books to buy" (*computing*) "Gender workshop poor direction" "1 hour is unusually short; 90mins more reasonable" "Could workshops be half an hour" "Choice too good - clashes of interest" "More choice of workshops on Sunday morning" "Some need repeating, impossible to go to all those wanted" "Like to be able to go to more" "not enough workshop time" "disappointed with choice on Sunday" "I wanted to go to more" "MDU workshop not advanced enough" "Run more of them more than once" "So you want to be a partner was EXCELLENT" "need to be

concise so that free time not eroded" "encourage facilitators to ask what is wanted from the session"

My comment

The final form was quite different from the original plans. The trouble was that, of the 12 originally-proposed workshops, only one was not significantly popular on the returns from the application forms, and it seemed a shame not to try and run them. There could have been room for an extra one on the Saturday, I suppose. Because we only had three rooms on Sunday that was the choice, and 6 facilitators on Saturday couldn't come on the Sunday. If we had done some workshops more than once, the facilitators themselves (just ordinary delegate-NPs like us all) would have missed going to workshops that they wanted. Besides, the Financial Advice was run twice, and only attracted 2 on the second run.

Keynote speech 1) unconditional, 5%; conditional on the choice not content 5% 2)12% 3)78%

comments

"Good subject, moderate presentation, disappointing content" "didn't really address NP issues" "Did not address his topic" "Not relevant to NPs particularly" "Speaker was patronising and had a different agenda" "got a bit vague and rambling" "Hopeless" "Speaker was condescending and didn't speak on the topic he was asked to" "Obviously a rehash of an old talk to principals and didn't address NP issues" "Choice of speech title good, but speaker appalling and gave speech on something completely different!" "Speaker not really interested in relevance to NPs" "Where was the relevance to NPs?" "Very bad note to start on, irrelevant to us, patronising" "What was he on about?" "Good choice, not very informative speech" "Good topic, shame he couldn't cover it" "Totally missed the point" "Poor speech, not very relevant, civil service jargon" "Poor, but if he had spoken on the subject suggested, then I would have replied differently" "Poor quality, pointless management speak" "Heartsink; nothing positive or clear about NPs" "He was not prepared to speak to NPs" "Good idea, but speech not relevant to title" "Ignored his brief, no relevance" "Awful" "Appalling speaker, completely beside the point" "He gave exactly the same talk to NAGPT a month ago" "Not very NP friendly" "Should have been given by somebody with better understanding of NP issues" "I didn't understand much of it" "Disheartening" "Unpleasant" "Dreadful" "Very disappointing" "Confirmed what we all thought" "NHSE obviously haven't got a clue about NPs" "Dreadful - non interactive" "Did not deliver even the subject given" "Good choice title- but hardly spoke on it" "Awful- he said nothing, but at least he got us going" "Need to make sure speaker sticks to subject" etc etc

My comment

These were just a few of the comments, and there were no comments keeping the balance. I was as disappointed as anyone. We, in March, originally asked the Minister of Health to come, but he pleaded a prior engagement. He suggested that his senior man at Quarry House, Mike Farrar should deputise. After the Richmond House meeting in May, we met Richard Armstrong, the PCG implementation manager, and found him to be friendly, eloquent, very knowledgeable and NP-aware, and when it was suggested that he do the speech, we readily accepted. We learned that he had been substituted by Dr. Leech only

a few weeks before the conference, without prior discussion, but on the recommendation that he "was a better speaker" . I suspect that the reason was simple; a weekend in Norwich before half term. However, I feel personally very let down, by the NHSE, and I asked Richard Armstrong to comment on the feedback. He told me "If we didn't think NPs were important, we would not have sent a very senior medical officer to address the conference. Dr Leech says he made it quite clear that his comments on clinical governance applied to NPs as well as principals, but didn't feel the need to keep repeating this during his speech. I feel that issues of clinical governance are more important than PCGs "

Soapbox 1)60% 2)38% 3)2%

comments

"Chairman allowed speaker to be ousted" "Overtaken, as these events are, by extreme views" "Too Long" "Need to be more controlled" "More time needed" "Some topics got carried away, others couldn't be discussed" "Poorly chaired, space not given to written submissions" "sometimes disorganised" "Better to debate formally proposed motions" "A bit long winded" "Needs to be tighter time-wise" "Lost momentum"

My Comment

The main problem faced by Dr. Viney was a disappointing number of written submissions, in fact only 2 were received by post in advance. And the other problem was one or two disruptive delegates who did not follow simple rules of politeness. I think formal debate of proposed motions is a good idea, but try getting people to put motions forward ! The item was allowed to run to 6.30 because the trade stands had gone. As suggested in the programme, delegates were always free to come and go as they pleased.

Question Time 1)84% 2)13% 3)3%

comments

"perhaps two microphones" "Answers not concise enough" "Members of the press should be excluded from this" "Some of the answers long winded" "late start-please be more efficient" "Better to do AGM stuff before QT"

My comment

Although the percentages were different, there were, numerically, similar numbers offering strong approval of Soapbox. The figures were distorted by less delegates present on the Sunday. I actually thought Soapbox was better, (not least because the answers at QT were pretty predictable, and the questions rather tame;) and Dr Viney was very fair and tolerant. QT was a deliberate late start; to allow a longer free time at coffee, because Richard's speech and the AGM business was only going to last 15 mins and not 45. The press didn't learn anything new or confidential. I did request 4 mikes for QT, and will take it up with the Hotel.

Crèche 1)81% 2)12% 3)7%

comments

"Seemed excellent - I wish I'd brought my baby !" "Chaotic babysitting Saturday night - due to last minute over-booking" "Need telephone contact from conference to crèche site" "Sleeping area / quiet room for children during the day and evening"

My comment

I would slightly take issue with some delegates intending to bring children for not letting our crèche organiser know well in advance. She had to hire her workers in proportion to the number of expected children, and NPs, of all people, should know about plenty of notice. However, it is vital that we have a crèche at any future conference. A quiet room at the Sport Village would have been a good idea, but unfortunately the hotel was full.

Should we have a conference next year ? 1)99% 2)1% 3) nil

Would you consider coming ? 1)94% 2)3% 3)3%

If it was in November ? 1)94% 2)3% 3)3%

If it was in Coventry ? 1)80% 2)14% 3)6%

comments

"North of England would be better" "Essex, Bedford, Milton Keynes" "York / Leeds good for the Scots" "Manchester would be great" "Prefer somewhere around Manchester" "Please make it more central" "North West better, Manchester ?" "Perhaps more central location next time" "York/Manchester" "Somewhere further north, eg Manchester" "What about Swindon" "Milton Keynes/Northampton" "Prefer further north" etc etc

my comment

There seems to be a desire to hold another conference. The few who said they would not come explained that it was because they would be principals. Obviously central or northern England is the most rational choice, but as explained above, Norwich was the only option this year. We must book a venue about a year in advance, and we have options on a few at the moment, but we cannot move until we have a local group or person prepared to help organise it. Those of you who I spoke to about it and those who made suggestions....well what about it ? It won't be that difficult, and I will provide as much input as I can as far as how things were done and where to get resources. But without that volunteer, there will be no conference 99.

How should next year be different ?

More speeches ? 1)12% 2)30% 3)58%

comments

"Not necessary"

My comment

Couldn't agree more

More advanced subject matter ? 1)42% 2)33% 3)25%

My comment

Not sure why I asked this. I don't think delegates did either, but obviously no overwhelming opinion here

More Workshops ? 1)71% 2)11% 3)18%

comments

"workshops should run twice opportunity to attend more" "More time for discussion in workshops" "too much choice, annoying to be unable to attend interesting ones" "Want more time for workshops"

My comment

More choices means either more rooms or less chance for facilitators to go to workshops themselves. The only alternative would have been to have reserved places for each workshop, but it goes against the spirit of the NANP, I think. It's no good asking delegates to suggest workshops they'd like to have because the majority only applied to come some 2 months before.

Different workshops ? 1)78% 2)17% 3)5%

comments

My comment

Suggestions gratefully received !

More Free Time ? 1)38% 2)9% 3)53%

comments

"Longer for coffee and tea" "(be able to) use sports facilities without missing out" "Yes, especially on last morning to allow time to check out" "Very difficult to find fuzzy time" "Had to skip some (of the programme) as too much informal chat to do" "Travelled a long way - but not seen Norwich" "Definitely not; if you've travelled all that way, there's no point wasting time" "Need an hour in the evening to sort out kids" "Spread it over two full days"

My comment

The range of opinion is interesting. The trouble is, you can't have more free time and more structured time, just one or the other, unless, as was suggested this year, the structured activities were optional. It isn't a realistic proposition to start activities before lunch, a lot of people are travelling some distances, ditto the finish time on Sunday, unless delegates spend 2 or 3 nights, which would prove expensive. And we do need to give the trade

stands enough time.

Clinical subjects ? 1)26% 2)19% 3)55%

comments

"No, needs to be focused on NP issues and boosting morale" "Waste of time of the current excellent format"

"No, there are enough meetings for this" "Not relevant and not enough time"

My comment

I tend to agree with those who feel that there is adequate provision for clinical topics elsewhere, but next years' organisers may feel differently

More Debate ? 1)63% 2)15% 3)22%

Hold it during the week? 1)11% 2)6% 3)83%

comments

"no no no !" "weekday time is money" "Yes, and only one full day, minimum disruption"

"Difficult to get time off" "Would most likely decrease attendance" "would much prefer"

"No because income would be lost"

My comment

I think it would be very impractical to hold it during the week.

Overall comments

The evaluation questionnaires seemed to cover most of the ground. It was fun to organise, and I appreciate all the kind comments, and accept most of the criticisms, but please bear in mind that we started from a "no idea" and "no money" start only 8 months before. My thanks go to all of the workshop facilitators who just got on with it, to our sponsors, to the venue staff who were, on the whole, very helpful and efficient, to Phil Hammond for such an entertaining speech, and to you, our members, for coming in the first place. I only hope that we get someone prepared to run with the next conference, and very soon.

Peter Harvey