

QuDoS in MS Recognition Programme Dr Wallace Brownlee Digital Innovation Winner

Your name, job title, and centre:

Dr Wallace Brownlee, clinical lead for MS, UCLH Hospital

Represented by:

Sarah Gillett, managing director, Neurology Academy

Jamie McGregor, director of policy, intelligence and operations, Neurology Academy

Project / initiative name: MS Academy

Project start date: 2016



Jamie McGregor (left) and **Sarah Gillett** (centre) accepting the award for Digital Innovation on behalf of Dr Wallace Brownlee, MS Academy, UCLH Hospital.

Challenge

- When COVID struck, there was a lack of accessible education as the pandemic necessitated postponement and cancellations, and lockdowns impeded traditional face-to-face meetings.
- The rapid transition away from face-to-face meetings left both patients and MS professionals isolated from the wider community, with an unmet need for peer support at a particularly difficult time.
- Rapid digital adoption created a gap for online education via webinars, and online learning programmes and webpages, all available without barriers and free of charge to the MS community.

Solution

The MS Academy responded to the unique challenges of COVID restrictions by delivering live webinars, which included panel discussions and open Q&A sessions.

We provided a platform where people could come together at a time of need, communicate, bounce ideas off one another, and just share best practice.

Those sessions were created specifically on the needs of the environment at the time. It was ever-changing, and we were delivering education almost weekly at that stage and making it available online.

Since then, the MS Academy has been able to build upon this and continue providing a digital learning platform that runs concurrently with face-to-face sessions. This allows people

who were previously not able to attend a face-to-face training programme because of caring responsibilities or geography the benefit of the very best in MS education and the support of feeling encouraged within a learning community.

Results

Since the transition to digital learning at the time of the COVID pandemic, the Academy has produced 51 webinars with 89 speakers: a total of 54 hours of education on MS.

Webinars produced by the MS Academy have been viewed more than 30,000 times, with 26,600 hours of teaching being provided to healthcare practitioners in MS care. The MS Academy website has amassed almost one million page views.

We've also delivered education specifically for patients and families, giving them access to healthcare professionals when it wasn't possible through normal measures.

To address the high rate of burnout seen in HCPs, we also ran MIND health sessions, some for those with MS and for nurses and practitioners.

Providing those sessions and having them as open access online gave patients and families an extra bit of support, but also supported the healthcare professionals to be the best they could be at that time.

Next steps

We started with live webinars and then moved to make them available on demand. This has now been expanded into completely virtual online courses, a number of resource sections, and collaborating with other organisations to ensure that their content is accessible directly from ours so that we can bring together the community.

This is something that we will just continue to expand on and seek feedback from delegates, and the healthcare professionals delivering the education, to ensure that we can progress and ultimately provide a broader range of virtual education to those who want to access it.

Additionally, we've developed a number of our in-person courses or masterclasses into hybrid offerings to create a greater sense of inclusion in networking so that they're not just attending online and there's no engagement.

They are able to interact with the room, interact with the speakers, and it's just more equitable access for people. People have various barriers or obstacles in life that may prevent them from attending in-person education. By countering these, we are just making a greater service for people with MS.

What has been the biggest challenge?

At the beginning of COVID, we had to adapt very quickly. We didn't deliver anything virtually prior to this, and it was a quick shift to: "How are we going to be able to educate people when we can't meet?"

Standing out from the crowd was also quite difficult because as soon as we'd done a number of educational things, a lot of other people started jumping on the same idea, and I think everybody got Zoom fatigue at one point.

How did you overcome this challenge?

We are very hands-on. All of our courses generally are small groups that interact with each other. Trying to find something that was able to bring that interaction between the people to make them feel as though they were still a part of a network was very difficult. Also, it was ensuring the education was always relevant and up-to-date with the ever-changing environment.

We also adapted webinars to be able to run the symposium sessions for the pharma companies and sponsors so that they actually got a platform to be able to have a voice as well because they weren't allowed into hospitals to meet.

What would be your advice to others wanting to replicate this project?

Look at what everyone in your community wants and needs: the 5Ws, who, what, where, why, when, give a great understanding of what is required. Ultimately in our position, this is those working in MS services and, most importantly, the people with MS who are accessing those services.

It needs deep thought; it needs multiple different opinions. Ultimately, that should create a greater idea and sense of understanding of what is required and what will be of most benefit.

Take a break.

Make a cup of something and enjoy an interview with, Sarah and Jamie who represented Dr Wallace Brownlee for winning the Digital Innovation category.



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