

# The Covid-19 effect:

Changes in healthcare professionals' media consumption and how you can embrace it

# Executive Summary

The global Covid-19 pandemic has presented exceptional challenges for health systems worldwide.

The immediate and sustained pressure on healthcare services and resources is unparalleled in peacetime, and we continue to face uncertainty over how the coronavirus will impact these systems – and our lives – in the longer term.

Throughout the crisis, frontline staff and healthcare managers have had to adapt their jobs and their practice, which in many cases have become unrecognisable from just a few months ago.

Our media brands quickly adapted, too, providing online resources to help their readers break down the plethora of emerging data and information. They have fulfilled the role of trusted expert, supporting their readers with regular, essential content that cuts through the noise and uncertainty.

Technology has become a mainstay in healthcare professionals' everyday practice, as they have had to find innovative ways to hold essential consultations, support their patients, and fulfil learning opportunities.

Education and events have moved online, too. Although these events are in their infancy, early results indicate that the industry is ready to welcome this new direction of travel. Clients and delegates alike recognise that the multiple benefits of virtual learning and networking outweigh the small number of drawbacks.

However, challenges for our audiences translate into opportunities for our clients. By recognising and embracing the interests of healthcare professionals, our clients can position themselves to reach out to them in interesting new ways. Four key considerations in how industry can embrace the Covid-19 effect:

- Audiences seek fact-checked, up-to-date information from trusted sources
- As digital content is leading the way, HCPs are looking for guidance in remote working
- HCPs show a greater preference in learning from their colleagues' and peers' experiences
- Going forward, virtual meetings and events will take out a larger share of activities as HCPs are embracing digital formats more than ever before

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**I think the nature of general practice  
will be changed forever by the virus**





# The Covid-19 effect: What healthcare professionals are facing

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It's like walking into no-man's land with a machine gun blasting at you, without any body armour





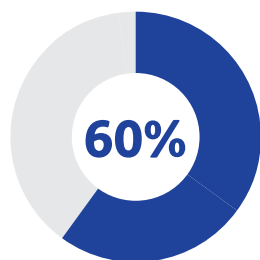
## GPs and practice managers have reorganised their practices

At the start of the pandemic, GP practices closed their doors to walk-in patients and cancelled routine appointments, carrying out **far fewer consultations**.

However, as hospitals became overrun with Covid-19 patients, some of the routine work normally undertaken in **secondary care has been diverted to general practice**.

Practice managers have had to find ways of **tackling the strategic and operation issues**: managing the challenges of GPs and nurses at the coalface, as well as the administrative problems relating to funding and staffing.

To tackle it, practices have had to focus on moving to triage-first models, implementing remote consultations, reorganising the layout of practices, sourcing PPE and supporting clinically vulnerable patients.



of GPs have been unhappy with the government's response to the crisis

**Source:**

Survey of 675 GPs between 17 and 21 April, covering issues affecting general practice, conducted by Pulse: <http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/cover-features/gps-go-forth-has-the-governments-strategy-put-gps-at-risk/20040712.article>

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It was a deluge at the beginning. The team volunteered to work many more hours to keep up with all the work coming in. I ended up with 647 emails – filled with tasks – in my inbox by the end of week two

## Community nurses are working on the frontline

Community nurses have seen **a rise in workload** as they continued to visit their elderly patients in their homes and battle with higher numbers of Covid-19 cases in care homes.

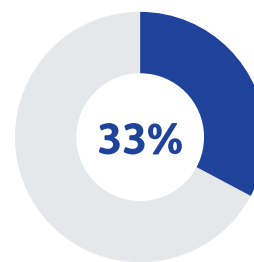
Practice nurses have **continued with some face-to-face consultations**, like immunisations and wound dressing but have conducted the majority of appointments using video consultations.

But as things return to 'normal', there is likely to be a **rush of consultations** for practice nurses and the need for a major catch-up in any child and adult vaccinations that patients missed, as well as cervical cancer screening that was put on hold.

Going forward, nurses appear to be worried about the fallout of the virus, particularly its **impact on their own and their patients' mental health**, as well as presentations of conditions that were missed during the pandemic.

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Our aim is to keep our staff and patients safe and reduce risk, but still strive to provide the same quality of care that we previously had with face-to-face consultations



of GPs received an adequate supply of face masks

**Source:**

Survey of 681 GPs between 5 and 9 June, covering a range of issues effecting general practice, conducted by Pulse: <http://www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/gp-confidence-in-governments-covid-response-plummets/20041012.article>

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We have had lots of patients displaying Covid-19-like symptoms coming into the pharmacy for advice and our phone lines have been ringing non-stop. The pharmacy profession is very vulnerable to this deadly virus

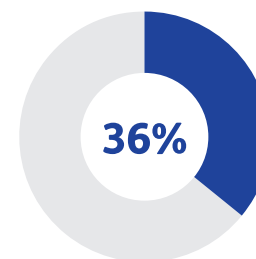
## Pharmacists have been the first port of call for patients

As GP practices have closed, community pharmacies have stayed open and **pharmacy teams workload has increased exponentially.**

They have had to deal with an increasing number of patients whilst **managing worsening medicines shortages** resulting from Covid-19-related supply chain issues, patients overordering supplies and **medication delivery** to isolating and shielding patients.

The impact of such a huge and intense workload, at extra cost and with no additional financial support, has left pharmacists and their teams feeling **vulnerable, exhausted and demoralised.**

Commissioned services – weight loss and smoking cessation, for example – as well as private services have been paused, resulting in a **loss of income.**



of HCPs say they are doing fewer clinics and doing more remotely because of Covid-19

**Source:**

Cogora's Healthcare Professionals Survey for Educational Needs, June 2020; 449 primary care nurses, GPs and addiction specialists



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As hospital pharmacists, we need to guarantee the availability of essential drugs in particular, which is a great challenge, especially in those countries that were heavily affected by the pandemic, such as Italy and Spain

## Hospital consultants must decide which patients to prioritise

Routine **capacity in hospital has been greatly reduced** to focus on coronavirus emergency care and treating very sick patients, **creating a significant backlog** in other services.

Consultants are facing big decisions over what areas of **healthcare to prioritise with their limited resources**, with cardiovascular care, cancer care, maternity services, screening and diagnostic services and urgent and time-critical surgery procedures at the front of the queue.

They have to **adapt to immediate challenges**, like optimising patient throughput, managing budgets, maintaining research and teaching activities, and balancing the collateral effects of Covid-19 on the healthcare system

Hospital pharmacists are battling on the frontline as integral **members of multidisciplinary patient care teams**, while tackling pharmacovigilance and monitoring treatment outcomes.

Their senior colleagues have had to focus on establishing emergency drug formularies and **drafting professional service guidance**, and managing issues with medication supplies, storage and transport.

# The Covid-19 effect: Changes in media consumption

**PULSE**

**Nursing**  
IN PRACTICE

**Management**  
in Practice

THE **PHARMACIST**

HEALTHCARE  
**LEADER**

**HOSPITAL  
PHARMACY  
EUROPE**

**HOSPITAL  
HEALTHCARE  
EUROPE**



## Healthcare professionals need help to navigate the myriad of information

Regular Covid-19-specific news articles have consistently proven to be **the most popular type of content** as the situation in the UK and across Europe has been constantly evolving, so our streams of updates have attracted swathes of online traffic.

All our media brands set up **dedicated Covid-19 sections** on their websites to help their readers to more easily navigate the myriad of information related to the crisis.

*Pulse* launched a Covid-19 Resources section, dedicated to collating **resources and information directly from health bodies and organisations** all in one place, together with plans developed by GPs and practices – including an instruction guide on printing your own PPE.

*Hospital Healthcare Europe* and *Hospital Pharmacy Europe* ran **key commentaries and analyses on coronavirus research** – for example, examining whether smokers are protected by the virus and exploring the safety and efficacy of certain drugs in Covid-19, like inhaled corticosteroids and ACE inhibitors.

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Pulse has been amazing at keeping us up to date given the speed of the events





## Healthcare professionals are looking for advice on specialist medical issues

**Much of the routine medical care** normally undertaken in both primary and secondary care **has been indefinitely postponed**. Those with suspected Covid-19 have self-isolated, those who are clinically vulnerable have been shielding and people with moderate or severe Covid-19 disease bypass primary care and are cared for in hospitals. Secondary care resources have diverted completely to treating and saving critically ill patients.

Therefore, where routine consultations are taking place (remotely), **GPs are dealing with more specialist medical issues** that would ordinarily be referred to or tackled in secondary care.

*Pulse* launched its online **Non-Covid-19 Clinical Crises series**. This content focuses on the subacute clinical presentations that GPs are now having to manage in primary care, including deep vein thrombosis, indicators of brain tumours, heart failure and cluster headaches.

**GPs and nurses have sustained their interest in continuing professional development** (CPD) and continued to complete *Pulse Learning* and *Nursing in Practice Learning* CPD modules despite revalidation and CPD requirements having been suspended during the pandemic.

For *Nursing in Practice*, the CPD modules on telephone triage and managing substance abuse have proven to be particularly popular.

Hospital clinicians have needed accurate and timely content **summing up new and developing guidance** to assist them in their frontline work. *Hospital Healthcare Europe* and *Hospital Pharmacy Europe* covered guideline summaries from NICE and EU associations on treating allergic and immunodeficient children during the pandemic, and handling allergen immunotherapy, with great success.



**Clear advice based on real scenarios helps to ensure we get it right.**



## Healthcare professionals want quick guidance on remote working

**Technology has been vitally important during the pandemic**, with primary care managers having introduced initiatives that could bring lasting change.

General practice quickly implemented telephone and video consultations to enable GPs and nurses to carry out necessary consultations, which patients have adapted well to.

Other uses of technology have emerged **to support patients remotely**. For example, one clinical commissioning group (CCG) rolled out home monitoring equipment to 6,000 patients with long-term conditions, following investment from NHS England to boost telehealth.

Elsewhere, **managers have set up virtual group meetings** for certain patient cohorts, to provide support remotely in the absence of face-to-face consultations.

One of the most popular stories on *Healthcare Leader* detailed **the implementation of virtual 90-minute sessions for patients** that had been identified as needing extra support, in which they could ask questions and seek assurance from a panel of specialists.

*Management in Practice's* coverage of tech-driven collaboration between 24 practices detailed numerous ways in which digital solutions are enabling scaled delivery of care during the pandemic.

Also popular was an article discussing future automation of administration tasks in primary care, highlighting how digitisation is set to form a huge part of primary care practice in the post-Covid-19 world.

## Reading about their colleagues' experiences is more popular than ever

In a slight change from their pre-pandemic preferences, healthcare professionals appear to be seeking **more first-person articles**. This format has become popular as it enables readers to share their own experiences and learn from their peers and colleagues, who are all experiencing the same challenges.

*Pulse's* piece penned by a leading GP, 'As a GP who's overcome coronavirus, here's what I want you to know', is the third most successful story ever on its website and attracted almost 1.2 million views.

Likewise, a first-person piece written for *The Pharmacist* and outlining what it's like having survived the virus was hugely popular with readers.

**Practice managers have also enjoyed peer-written content**, resulting in the newly launched series 'Management during Covid-19' on *Management in Practice*, through which managers share their experiences of how their teams have coped during the crisis.

This, in turn, led to a similar series for *Healthcare Leader* **examining the impact of the pandemic** from the view of primary care leaders and decision makers. One of the best-received pieces was a case study on using virtual group meetings to reassure communities of patients.



“

You've connected with us through this pandemic, and we all have to look for positives at the moment.



## HCPs like to know they are being given the praise they deserve

Our audiences have enjoyed reading content that **recognises and applauds the hard work** they undertake in the course of their everyday practice.

In April, a page dedicated to covering instances of pharmacists going beyond the call of duty was launched. This was the result of readers getting in touch with *The Pharmacist* on Twitter to share their experiences, demonstrating the popularity of social media links with healthcare professionals.

In similar vein, *Nursing in Practice* relaunched its #NursingStars campaign in partnership with the New NHS Alliance. Originally run in 2018 and then named Nursing Ninjas, the rebranded campaign aims to recognise practice and community nurses and midwives **who have gone above and beyond and risked their lives during the crisis**. The series includes Q&As, blogs and social media posts about the work and experiences of nurses through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Community pharmacists have sought and responded to content that successfully advocates for their profession. For example, the outcry over the life assurance exclusion – covered by *The Pharmacist* – helped to prompt a U-turn from the government.



**All our staff have commented that having the time and space and opportunity to feel heard and valued is imperative to affecting positive change for the future**



“

Congratulations on the fantastic effort in raising the plight of frontline BAME healthcare professionals during the pandemic

## They have turned to the trusted media to tell them what is relevant

Throughout the pandemic, consumer-facing news and social media have been awash with stories about issues that directly affect healthcare professionals. However, healthcare professionals have consistently looked to our brands **to keep them informed**.

The evolving problems with the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) have been covered extensively by traditional news media.

Our audiences, however, have instead relied upon us **to filter through the deluge of noise** and present the most relevant and up-to-date angles, and our content on these issues has been highly popular.

News outlets picked up that Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) healthcare workers were disproportionately affected by coronavirus, but we were able **to provide unrivalled coverage** that proved popular with readers.

For example, a *Nursing in Practice* piece on understanding the Covid-19 risk among BAME communities did particularly well.

Moreover, *Pulse* and *Management in Practice* provided a steady flow of **updated content** relating to the imbalance and its impact in primary care, which readers have consumed enthusiastically.

In addition *The Pharmacist* launched a racism and BAME health survey to give readers their own chance to voice their experiences which attracted a large number of responses.



## Readers want a trusted source to debunk the clinical myths

With an intense stream of content and information coming from all angles, our audiences have needed to **filter out the truth from the fiction**. Our audiences trust and rely on us to help them do that.

For example, *Hospital Healthcare Europe* achieved huge success with its piece exploring the role of vitamin D as a biomarker for symptom severity in Covid-19, after popular press touted vitamin D as a potential key factor in combatting the infection.

Well-received articles aimed at **debunking coronavirus myths** in *Nursing in Practice* include one on comparing flu and Covid19, which received the most views across the website in April. It was closely followed by a piece highlighting the misleading nature of an ITV News item about the role of district nurses.

The efficacy of hydroxychloroquine is **just one of the issues** that GPs have relied upon *Pulse* to report on accurately, after *The Lancet* was forced to retract a paper that wrongly concluded that hydroxychloroquine increases the risk of death in Covid-19 patients.

“

**Thank you for a consistently helpful and relevant publication. It offers me a broad coverage of issues, sensitive to frontline concerns, supportive in many ways and across many fields. You have a great formula**



## Healthcare professionals are consuming more digital content than ever before

Audiences are seeking the most up-to-date, factual information.

All our media brands have seen a significant upsurge in traffic to their websites, with users spending more time on the sites. They have increased and varied the content they're producing to meet demand.

**PULSE**



Page views increased by

**248%**

across March/April/May  
compared to three months before



Website users increased by

**392%**

across March/April/May  
compared to three months before

**Nursing**  
IN PRACTICE



Page views increased by

**40%**

across March/April/May  
compared to three months before



Website users increased by

**39%**

across March/April/May  
compared to three months before

# The Covid-19 effect: Changes in educational consumption

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The UK Government's response has been poor, with little interest in the welfare of frontline clinicians

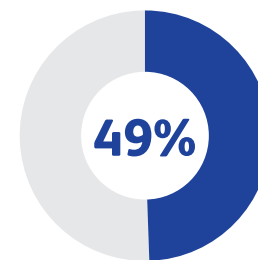
## HCPs are embracing virtual events more than ever before

Conferences, advisory boards, round tables and exhibitions have **traditionally** been a mainstay for healthcare professionals, enabling them to share best practice, network with leaders, colleagues and peers, learn new skills and fulfil CPD requirements.

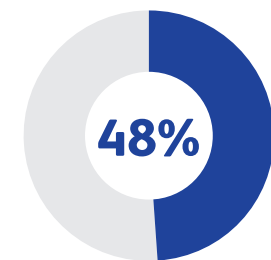
An early casualty of the Covid-19 outbreak, however, was public gatherings and large-scale events. We have had to **adapt and develop alternative platforms** for clients to reach their audiences, and for audiences to derive the benefits of these unique learning experiences.

Healthcare professionals are **increasingly looking to digital options**, such as virtual meetings. As people become more comfortable with the scope of technology applications during the Covid-19 crisis, engagement has improved.

We have witnessed **a tangible shift in mindset**, with healthcare professionals demonstrating greater enthusiasm for virtual events.



of HCPs have a preference  
for recorded videos over  
live sessions



of HCPs are confident with  
using new communication  
platforms





## Virtual events have proven to be overwhelmingly popular

Board meetings that typically would have convened between six and eight healthcare professionals, and last up to a day and a half, are being successfully **run over the course of two days in shorter sessions**, using online conferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

With participants having embraced the technology, which is largely seamless, remote meetings have proven to be an **efficient alternative to face-to-face advisory boards**.

- Acceptances rates have increased, owing to more flexible scheduling with no requirement for travel.
- Without travel, accommodation, and refreshment expenses, running costs are significantly lower.

- Unspent budget can be reinvested into activities suggested by the board.
- Native remote platform analytics and polling applications – such as Mentimeter – have advantages over ‘hand in the air’ voting, including anonymous polling and interactive analysis of the data during the meeting.

An **example of the transition to virtual events** is that following overwhelmingly positive feedback from the board and the client when successfully converting a bi-annual, multidisciplinary advisory board on vascular access management to a virtual format, the meeting will only be convened physically every second or third time going forward, meaning the board can convene more frequently.

## Webinars provide more scope for interactivity

With events cancelled en masse, we have seen **increased interest in webinars**. Attendance has risen significantly, which has guided the industry towards wholesale adoption of webinars.

As a result, we have seen **clients boost their spend on webinars**. This enables more professional webinars of a higher quality, with more scope for interactivity.

Moreover, webinars offer countless opportunities for client branding, virtual exhibition stands, and downloadable materials, which attendees can consume in their own time.

Webinars offer similar advantages to advisory boards, but **at great scale**. Specific benefits include:

- **more globalised audiences**, seeking insights into other regions' working practices without the restriction of only being able to attend domestic or local meetings
- participation from other specialties leading to **greater focus on multidisciplinary working**
- **greater pool of key opinion leaders** to draw from, as there is no requirement for them to travel
- the option to **record and host as on-demand material**, which is a more straightforward and lower-cost alternative to using audio-visual providers filming on the day.



**It seems to me a good format and I hope that more will be done.**



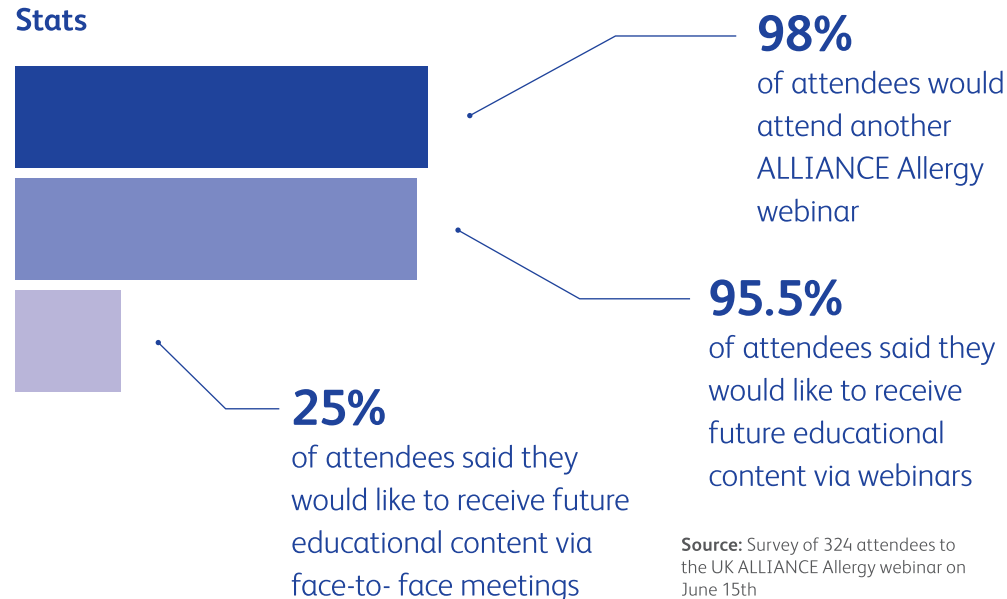
**I love these webinars**

Cogora has held a series of interactive webinars for the ALLIANCE programme, led by experts and rising-stars in allergy care across the UK, France, Spain, Italy and Germany.

With five webinars in total, held in the local language, renowned ALLIANCE faculty members discussed the practical implications of breaking European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) and local guidelines to result in the provision of exemplary diagnosis and care to allergy patients, despite the barriers instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

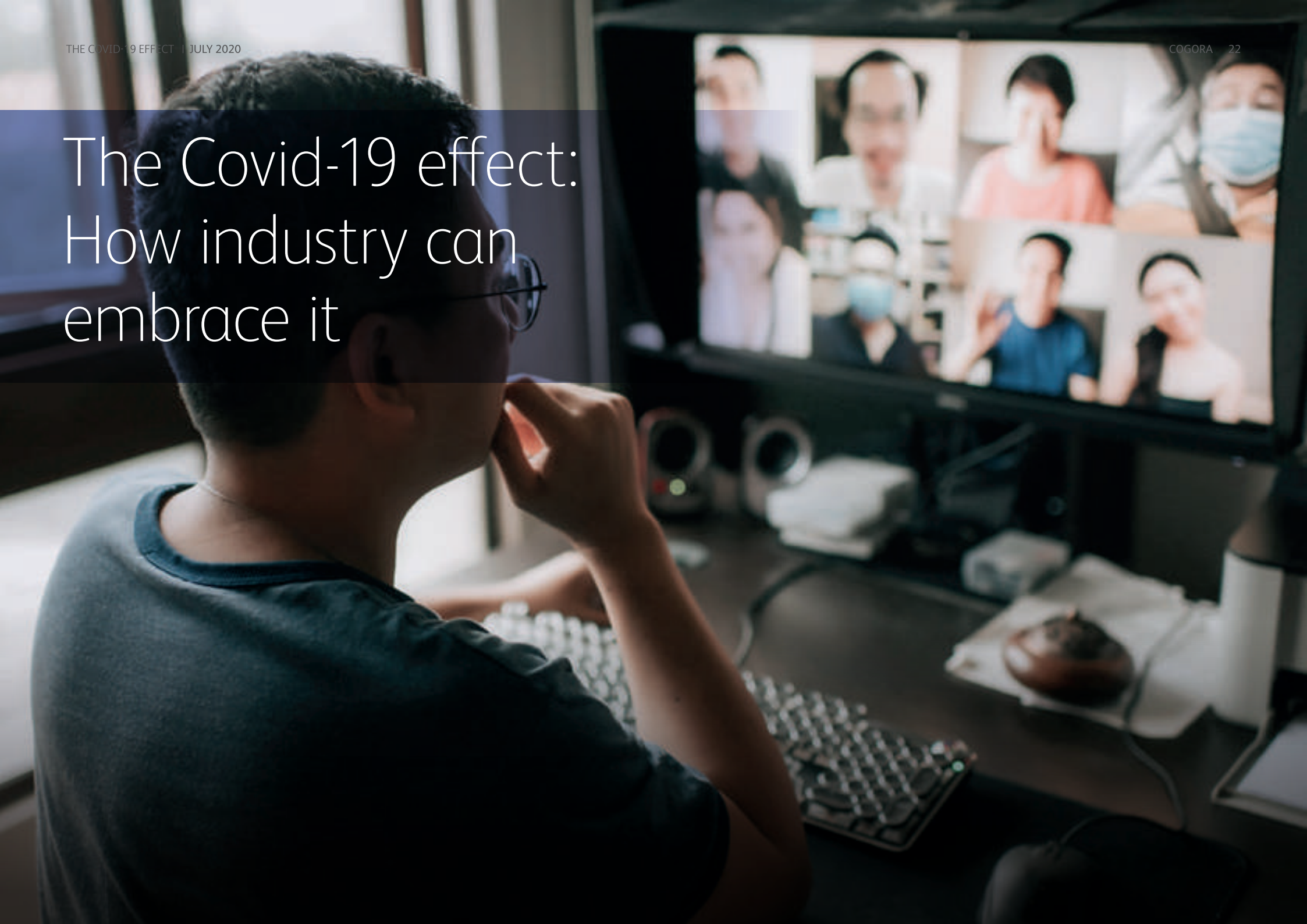
The webinars were very popular, with 1,834 HCPs registering over a 5-week period and 716 attending in the short space of 2-weeks (15 June - 30 June 2020).

### Stats



**Source:** Survey of 324 attendees to the UK ALLIANCE Allergy webinar on June 15th

# The Covid-19 effect: How industry can embrace it





## Healthcare professionals are adapting to a virtual future

The Covid-19 pandemic has created immense challenges for our healthcare systems.

Notably, it has forced people to acknowledge the opportunities that remote working and digital platforms present, and to adapt to using them routinely.

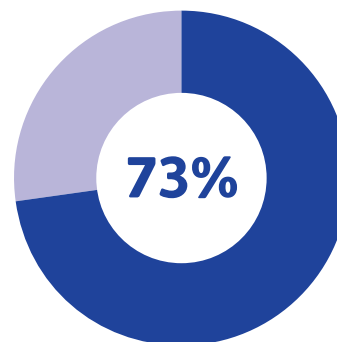
Solutions like Zoom and Microsoft Teams have seen a surge in users across all industries, including healthcare – a sector that, historically, has been reluctant to embrace such technology.

### Remote events – the future for education and conferencing

Where our clients have previously voiced concerns about virtual meetings and e-learning formats, they are now recognising that remote offerings provide multiple advantages over live formats that outweigh their limited drawbacks.

They offer industry partners a fantastic opportunity to reach an audience who are restricted from attending a face-to-face meeting. They can be developed to include all the key elements of a traditional conference, for example:

- virtual 'venue'
- live presentations
- on-demand seminars
- a sponsor showcase.



of HCPs say Covid-19 has made them change their learning and education sources

Source: Cogora's Healthcare Professionals Survey for Educational Needs, June 2020; 449 primary care nurses, GPs and addiction specialists

As well as flexibility, virtual events can deliver a deeper level of content to delegates and supplement the usual exhibition resources with educational webinars, panels, 'ask the expert' sessions, or product showcases, among other things.

Virtual meetings and events enable greater flexibility – they can be held in the evenings, for example – saving attendees time and money and meaning they don't have to take time away from work.

Individual video interviews with key opinion leaders as an addendum to online advisory boards provide added value.

We recommend that clients make use of this format, with the one-to-one in-depth interviews held in advance of the advisory boards. This allows us to draw more detailed insight from each participant, which can be built into the agenda for discussion in the board itself.

### Online content – a shift in focus for our audiences

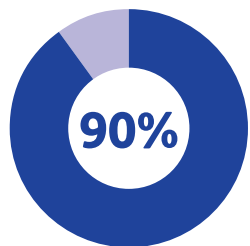
Healthcare professionals, too, are embracing digital formats more than before, seeking as much expert guidance and clinical advice as possible and looking to e-learning platforms to fulfil CPD.

Having depended on technology to support patients throughout the pandemic, as well as to adapt to changes to their practice, clinicians have witnessed the manifold benefits of digitisation. We expect adoption of these solutions to increase exponentially in the post-Covid-19 world.

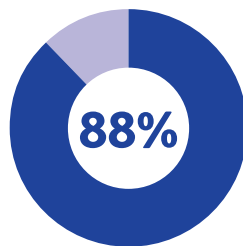
Most significantly, we have witnessed consumption of online content across all our media brands soar throughout the pandemic. Not only are our readers seeking more content, but the focus of the content they seek has shifted.

Against a backdrop of changes to what they do and how they do it, healthcare professionals have consistently responded well to content that facilitates their evolving job roles: from clinical topics helping GPs to take on patients that would previously been seen and treated in secondary care, to fast-moving official guidance and best practice case studies from professional peers.

Our audiences are absorbing online content on our brands' websites and through our social media channels. Clients must occupy this space intelligently and cohesively to communicate with audiences and boost revenue.



of HCPs say they are confident with using new communication sources



of GPs think a 'greater use of remote consultations' should be retained in the long-term



# About Cogora

Cogora is one of the UK's leading full-service healthcare marketing agencies that sits at the heart of a highly engaged community of 220,000 healthcare professionals.

We have vast knowledge of the healthcare market and the communities within it, which we've developed over more than 30 years.

We use that insight to design and deliver innovative initiatives that impact clinical practice and make change happen. Our dedicated team of more than 70 talented, creative individuals includes specialists in medical writing, design, development, marketing, digital and account management.

This means that, unlike other agencies, we have all that expertise in house. We use that advantage to ensure our clients' projects are timely, successful and cost effective.

## Sources:

Cogora's Healthcare Professionals Survey for Educational Needs, June 2020; 449 primary care nurses, GPs and addiction specialists

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First published 2020 by Cogora. 140 London Wall, London EC2Y 5DN, UK.

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