

National Pharmaceutical Congress Summer Webinar:
With Covid in the Rear-View: The Way We Live Now



Executive Summary

SEPTEMBER 7, 2022
11:00 AM ET

The 2022 National Pharmaceutical Congress Summer Webinar examined the way we live and work in the post-pandemic world.

This report provides a summary of the presentations and discussion. It has been prepared for the exclusive use of registrants to the 2022 NPC Summer Webinar.



A Breakthrough in COVID-19 Testing

Introducing the MicroGEM™ Sal6830™ Point-of-Care RT-PCR System, the **only** FDA and Health Canada authorized* PCR based Saliva Test for COVID-19 screening.

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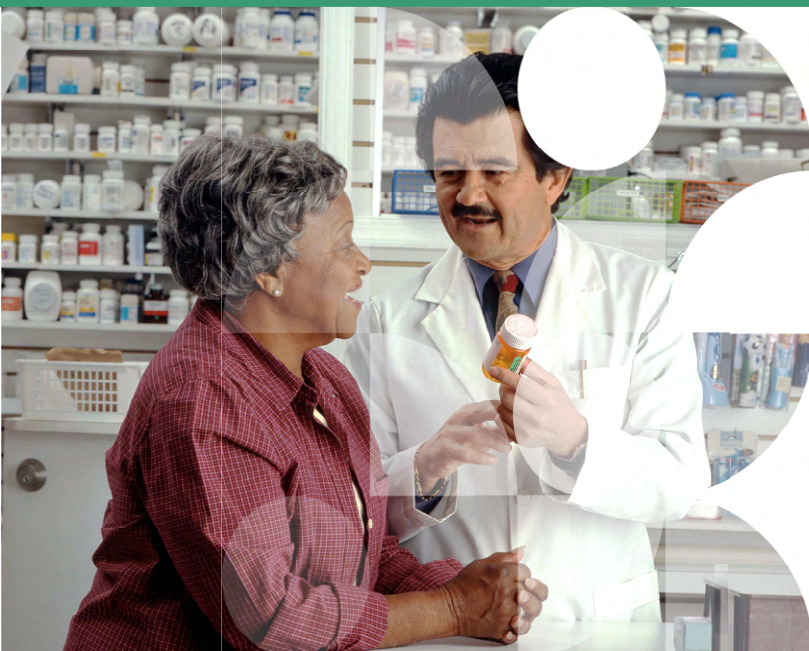
FDA authorized* point-of-care technology captures intact virus, an important indicator of infection.



Authorized for use by the FDA under an Emergency Use Authorization and by the Health Canada under an Interim Order



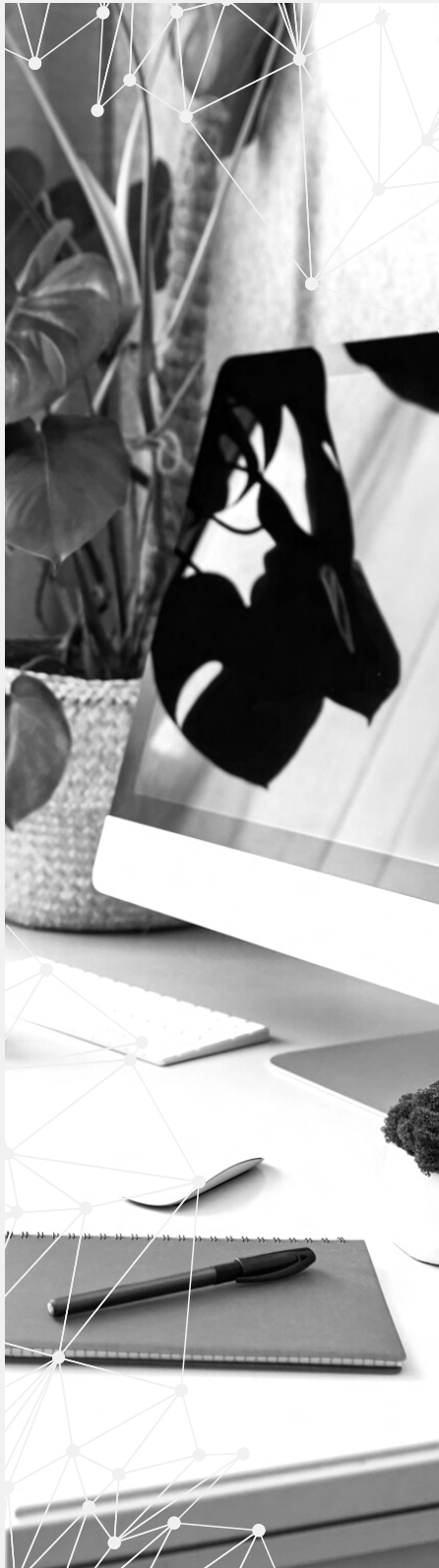
Developed with support from the National Institutes of Health (NIH)



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* Authorized by the FDA for the point-of-care space under an Emergency Use Authorization and by the Health Canada under an Interim Order.



Adapting to the new world of work in Pharma

At the 2022 NPC Summer Webinar on September 7th, panelists discussed how the Pharma industry has acclimated: by developing cultural competence, adapting to new tech and tools, and adjusting to new ways of working.

Speakers at this session were **Eileen McMahon**, Senior Partner at Torys LLP; **Niki Papaioannou**, Founder of publicity firm Niki Inc; and **Mark Smithyes**, Founder of Life Sciences Consulting.



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Cultural competence through diverse hiring

“I believe that your team’s [diversity] should reflect the world,” said Niki Papaioannou during her presentation at the 2022 National Pharmaceutical Congress Summer Webinar. Papaioannou, the founder of Niki Inc, a Toronto-based public relations firm, made the case for building diverse teams.

She discussed how developing cultural competence is more important than ever—and how it can have a profound impact on business—for serving an increasingly online patient community.

“Organizations now are invoked to be online and have a social presence, to be transparent, to have a position on things,” Papaioannou noted, highlighting the caution necessary for navigating a constantly-connected world. “It’s not enough” anymore to talk about diversity through advertising, she said. “People will follow your social platforms to see if they trust what you’re about.”

Papaioannou suggested that employing a diverse team that is representative of the diversity of the customer base can help mitigate the problems that arise through a lack of understanding. “Employing people from different cultural groups [is like getting] inside information,” she said, and can help to “overcome unconscious bias.”





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“If you are a diverse organization, [if they feel represented], the BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour] and Asian communities will respond.”

Papaioannou’s firm emphasizes its collaborative approach, first seeking to understand the audience and speak to them in their own vernacular. “When I started my PR business, I employed [people who look and act like me]. And it proved problematic because we didn’t have an ear on the whole world.”

“[Cultural competence] is important in the health sphere and pharmaceuticals,” she said, since “health [information is] often very differently consumed by different cultural groups.” She cited the uneven impact of vaccine rollout efforts as a high-profile example.

A report published in 2021 by the Canadian Medical Association (CMA) explains that vaccine hesitancy in Indigenous communities has its roots in well-documented examples of racially segregated healthcare and medical experimentation in Canada. Per the report, “these concerns, fears and experiences need to be taken seriously by doctors and other healthcare professionals and differentiated from the ‘anti-vax’ movements that have thrived on social media in recent years.”

Studies out of the United States have shown similar reasons for vaccine hesitancy among Black communities. Papaioannou—in line with the report’s recommendations—suggested that cultural competence could be the answer.

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“When you hire for diversity, and you’re open to input from your team, it impacts your go-to-market strategy in a way that saves you money in the end,” she said, “and can prevent you from having a damaging tone-deaf moment.”

How leaders can help manage mental health in the workplace

“Communicating by video is very different from communicating by phone or in person,” said Eileen McMahon, Senior Partner at Torys LLP. “It’s creating a new world that requires a whole new skill set to navigate.”

During her presentation at the 2022 National Pharmaceutical Congress Summer Webinar, McMahon gave an overview of the updated experience of tech, tools, and sustainability in the workplace.

“There’s a new skill set required [now that] private life has spilled over into our work life and vice versa,” she said. “That [new] type of hybrid work, that blending, [has caused] new mental and physical health issues to arise.”

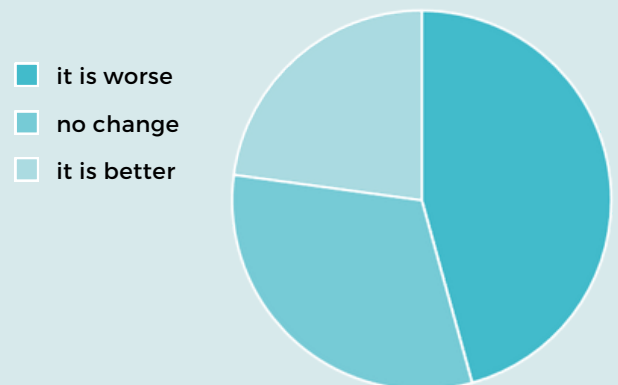
“I’m speaking much more with [my team] about mental health issues than ever before,” McMahon said, describing similar conversations with clients and colleagues. “People are rethinking their careers, saying, ‘Do I really want to be

doing what I’m doing?’ Everyone is a little off as we adjust to the new world order.”

To mitigate the impact of the transition to the new way of doing things, McMahon said, “human-centric leadership is critical.” Leaders must develop new skill sets to encourage and improve staff communication and to “get better interaction going, as opposed to silos,” she said.

McMahon polled the NPC audience on the impact of new modes of work on collaboration and brainstorming (fig. 1)—46% said collaboration was more difficult now—and its effect on mental health (fig. 2), which a majority said had worsened.

fig. 1 How has the new work environment affected innovation or brainstorming with team members?



The results of both polls, she said, were consistent with what she was seeing across the board from “companies, consultants, law firms, and accountants.”



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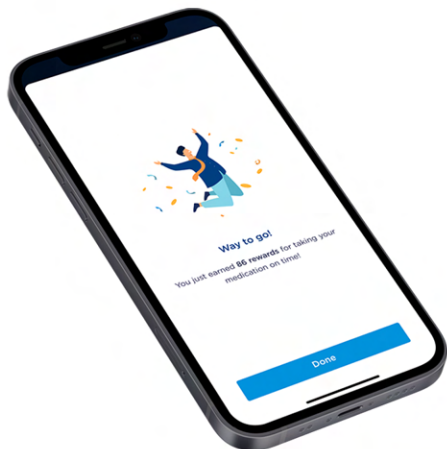
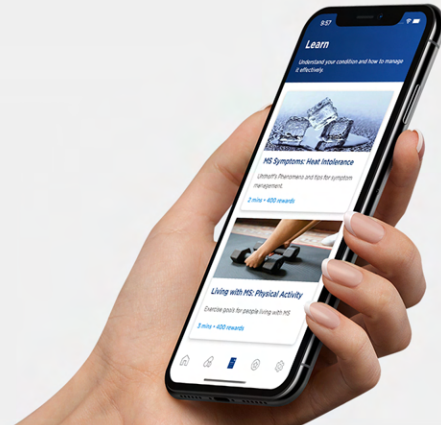


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McMahon advised leaders to “try to ensure people are connected” by proactively bridging the gap between people at different career stages and encouraging mentorship. She also recommended “walking the physical and virtual floor” by checking in with all team members in appropriate ways. “Making a physical connection” by bringing someone a Starbucks or setting up a team call to help someone with their workflow can ensure people feel connected, she said.

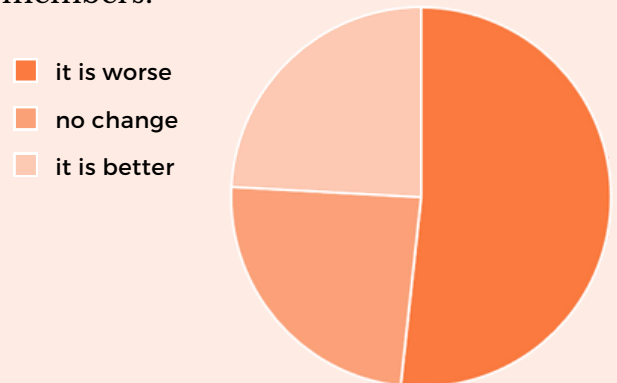
“Most importantly, it’s important for leaders to take care of themselves,” McMahon said. She cautioned against the social stigma that prevents people in senior roles from speaking out about their mental health. “We’re all struggling in some ways with this new world environment. It’s important to take care of yourselves [so that] you can be as strong a leader as you can be.”

Navigating the world of work through relationships

The current skill set for work in Pharma, said Mark Smithyes, President of Life Sciences Consulting, includes “some old stuff, some new stuff, and some stuff that’s coming just around the corner.”

During his presentation at the National Pharmaceutical Congress Summer Webinar, Smithyes detailed key considerations for adapting to the current workplace.

fig. 2 How has the new work environment affected the mental health of your team members?



According to Smithyes, the one thing that hasn’t changed is the need for human-centric leadership—it may be more critical than ever. “Relationships are fundamental,” he said, “and that hasn’t changed. They’re founded on trust, and trust is founded on two things: that you do what you say you will, and that you provide value on every interaction.”

He described how relationships are now mediated by “new tools, [such as] Zoom, social media, [and] YouTube.” Particularly in Pharma, he said, “most companies out there [now] have some form of digital virtual sales force.”

Smithyes cited [a recent survey](#) that found a majority of physicians now prefer virtual interactions with industry and do not expect to return to pre-pandemic communication habits. “Of course, what healthcare practitioners prefer and what

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has impact can be two separate things,” he said. “Face-to-face is still better, [because] you can build relationships—build trust—more easily and more effectively.”

“We’re going to have to figure out how to build those relationships and trust more effectively,” Smithyes said, as virtual interactions become an increased part of doing business.

The other big factor changing the world of work, according to Smithyes, is the talent shortage. “We knew this was coming, and [it’s] not temporary,” he said, [citing a 2018 report by Korn Ferry](#) that predicted a global shortage of skilled labour that would leave 85 million roles unfilled by 2030.

The shortage “means great opportunities for people early in their careers, as well as people interested in moving up the corporate ladder,” Smithyes said, “[but] an alarm bell for employers.” It is creating “an absolute need to attract employees, [and] it’s going to require [employers] to do the right thing,” he said.

“For the last decade or so, we’ve been talking about a social license to operate,” Smithyes said, which includes not only corporate social responsibility but also adherence to ESG [Environment, Social, and Governance] and DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] principles.

It’s also an essential part of company culture, which Smithyes emphasized is core to companies’ success.

“Most companies are behind in the attraction and retention building blocks, but that’s going to need to change,” he said. He recommends “the concept of servant leadership,” which aligns closely with human-centric leadership.

“Relationships and trust,” Smithyes said, “never go out of style.”





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Meet the Faculty



NIKI PAPAIOANNOU

founder of "Niki Inc," a Toronto-based publicity firm, with over 10 years' experience in senior marketing roles; works with superstars and entrepreneurs through non-profit PR initiatives to improve the planet and advance racial and gender equity.



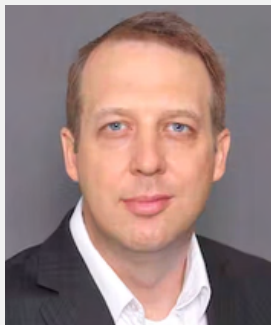
EILEEN MCMAHON

Senior Partner at Torys LLP and the Chair of Torys Intellectual Property and Food and Drug Regulatory Practices, one of a handful of Canadian lawyers advising on regulatory clearance and intellectual property protection of products.



MARK SMITHYES

Founder of Life Sciences Consulting, an accomplished and transformational leader with 25+ years' experience in the life sciences; Board Chair for Life Sciences Ontario and a Seasonal Lecturer at the University of Toronto.



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