

Galanter, M., White, W. L., & Hunter, B. (2022). Virtual Twelve Step meeting attendance during the COVID-19 period: A study of members of Narcotics Anonymous, *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, 16(2), e81-e86. doi: 10.1097/ADM.0000000000000852.

Abstract

Objectives: Face-to-face meetings are key components of Twelve Step (TS) fellowships' support of members' abstinence. Home confinement during COVID-19 made this less feasible. Our objective was to ascertain whether a transition to virtual online meetings among TS members took place, and whether it was potentially effective.

Methods: Two thousand one hundred fifty-two long-standing USA members of Narcotics Anonymous (NA) were surveyed to ascertain their recovery-related experiences and their relation to the transition to virtual meetings.

Results: During the previous week (ie, 'during COVID-19') respondents attended more virtual meetings ($= 4.13[SD4.64]$) than they had attended both face-to-face meetings before COVID-19 ($= 3.35[SD2.05]$), and also face-to-face meetings during COVID-19 ($= 0.75[SD1.8]$). Many of the meetings were accessed from sites remote from their homes (44.4%), even overseas (21.5%). The majority (64.9%) found virtual meetings at least as effective in promoting their abstinence as were face-to-face meetings, and 41.8% estimated the same for newcomers. A shorter period of antecedent abstinence from drugs and increased loneliness were associated with increased craving during the transition period. Relative to Whites, Black respondents were less distressed, with a lesser increase in craving, and currently attended more virtual meetings. Data provided by a national program reflected a large increase in virtual TS attendance since the onset of the pandemic.

Conclusions: In a survey of well-established NA members, most had made a successful transition from face-to-face to virtual meetings, relative to their antecedent characteristics. This successful transition suggests the possibility of an enhanced opportunity for stabilizing TS membership.