My SABCS Experience by Donna Charlevoix

I attended multiple sessions including plenary, education, controversies and poster. The plenary session was focused on lobular and provided a good overview of the state of knowledge of lobular breast cancer. I found the presentations to be informative and not too technical. I didn't understand absolutely everything but probably close to 85-90%. There were several Education sessions that appeared to be targeted to clinicians. They were also informative, often providing results of clinical trials or giving other actionable information. The Controversies session was most interesting. The three 30-minute presentations included an overview of the science topic and then 2 sessions that provided argument for a particular perspective. The session topic was "Are ADCs targeted therapy or chemotherapy?" Each speaker provided evidence for their assigned topic. I thought it was a very creative way to present information and I found it very engaging. The poster session I preferred was the Thursday morning focus session on lobular. It was a small set of posters and it was easy to engage with the researchers. The short summaries by the authors in a panel discussion was also interesting.

I found the networking with other patient advocates the most impactful part of the Symposium. I knew many advocates from interactions online, through social media or via Zoom calls. It was amazing to be able to meet people in real life and have candid conversations with them. I was late to the LBCA advocate breakfast because I lost track of time in the poster session. I wish I would have been able to visit with advocates over breakfast.

My advocacy activities include research, policy and peer support. The science I learned will directly help me with my research advocacy and it will inform my overall understanding of the state of breast cancer when I reach out to elected officials. I think my peer support work is going to benefit the most from my attending SABCS in person. My interactions with other advocates and experiences all the different aspects of the Symposium is something I can share with other patients. The patients in the two support groups I run have varied understanding (and interest) in research. I will be able to take what I leaned and share it with them in a way that is meaningful to them. One of my groups is going to do a post-SABCS webinar for our members. Another advocate and I, along with an ILC researcher, will provide an overview of our experiences and our top three take aways. We typically have 25-

30 attendees in our webinars and then post the recordings on YouTube so others can view them.

I don't think there was anything I wish I had known before the event. I've attended many science/research conferences for my professional work, so I knew what to expect. This being said, I know that is not the case for most advocates. I would advise other advocates on three topics for attending SABCS:

(1) Pace yourself. It is a long week, and it is easy to get exhausted. There is no possible way to see everything so make a schedule AND coordinate with other advocates to see different things. You can compare notes after the Symposium.

(2) Take notes. Bring a notebook or use the one provided at the registration desk. Don't try to write everything down but write at least one take-away from each session or event you participate in.

(3) Schedule time to visit the exhibit hall. Talk to the various advocate groups that are there. Visit the pharmaceutical exhibits and ask them to tell you what the most important thing their company is doing for breast cancer patients.