CONFERENCE REVIEW

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15th World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WCDEM)
RAI Congress Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 13-16 May 2007

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Attracting more than 900 delegates from 60 countries, the theme of *Preparedness: Knowledge, Training, and Networks*, at the 15th World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine offered 130 sessions and 285 posters on a wide range of topics.

The Congress delivered very clear products to enable experts, organisations, and governments to be better prepared for the next disaster or crisis as a critical need for consistent standards and benchmarks in emergency preparedness around the world. To address this need, intense workshops were held to develop recommendations on a focused subset of hospital emergency preparedness benchmarks; define and implement an ongoing process to pilot and evaluate those benchmarks, and promote a consensus building process that would be used to develop and implement these and additional benchmarks in the future.

Pre-Congress workshops

The local organising committee offered three different courses to Congress participants. These internationally accredited and certified courses covered all aspects of disaster and emergency medicine in:

- Urban Search and Rescue Medicine
- Advanced HazMat Life Support
- Simulation-based medical disaster management course

Keynote speakers

The local organising committee invited various high profile and dynamic keynote speakers:

Dr Gino Strada, Director, Emergency, Milan, Italy

Professor Jennifer Leaning, MD, S.M.H., Harvard School of Public Health, Cambridge, MA

Professor Dr A.D.M.E. Osterhaus, Erasmus MC in Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Dr Fiona Wood, FRASC, AO, Clinical Professor, Director, Royal Perth Hospital Burns Unit, Western Australia

Professor Mads Gilbert, Dept of Emergency Medicine, University Hospital North Norway

Professor Eddy Rahardjo, MD, PhD, School of Medicine, Airlangga University, Indonesia, Advisor to the US Nation Library of Medicine and World Bank

Each keynote speaker spoke about their specific field of expertise in relation to the Congress. One of the highlights was in listening to Dr Strada describe how he established the medical outreach organisation, 'Emergency', which provides free, high quality medical and surgical treatment to the civilian victims of war, landmines and poverty. He shared his belief that medicine ought to not only be a human right but also ought to be free of charge. He had a point! He estimated that 10% of war victims were civilians during World War I, 50-60% during World War II, and in 2007 a staggering 90%. His inspiring stories made many participants feel that so much more work was needed and that in comparison, our own health care systems, despite their foibles, have lots to offer.

Scientific Program

With 12 concurrent sessions, participants were kept motivated and active, as can be seen by the following topics in the Scientific Program:

Scientific Program Topics (in alphabetical order)

Civilian-Military Collaboration	Miscellaneous
Education and training	Nursing and paramedic issues
- Competencies	Paediatrics
- Credentialing	Preparedness
- Standards	- Community/National/International
EMS systems	- Coordination, Control and Information
- Helicopter emergency medical services	- Safe hospitals
- System Development	- Systems
- Transportation	- First Aid organisations
- Urban Search and Rescue teams	- Planning
Ethics and International Law	- Politicians versus professionals
Hot Topics	- Resilience
Humanitarian crises	Public health
- Humanitarian space	- Effects on society
- Landmines	- Infectious diseases and pandemics
Mass gatherings	Psychosocial aspects
- Large Scale events	Research and health surveillance
- Olympic Games	Types in disaster
Life threatening situations in daily emergencies and disasters	- CBRN
- Bleeding	- Climate change
- Burns and explosions	- Earthquakes
- Crush injuries	- Ferryboats and cruise ships
- Dead body identification and management	- Flooding
- Hypothermia	- Recent disasters
- Hypoxia	- Refugees and conflicts
- Trauma	- Terrorism
- Triage	- Tsunami

Oral presentations and posters included original research, new programs, latest developments and new initiatives.

Targeted Agenda Program

A new initiative for the 2007 Congress was the Targeted Agenda Programme (TAP) which uses the Internet and other forms of communication as an interactive and dynamic tool to channel knowledge. Prior, and during the Congress, 7 TAP groups consisting of a chairman

and 6-8 experts discussed relevant topics to define targets to provide a framework for future problem-solving.

On the first day of the Congress, experts presented their vision on an issue. Discussion took place on the second day between experts and Congress participants and on the third day, each TAP group finalised their statements.

Post-Congress Workshops

A post-Congress workshop was offered to delegates called 'Guidelines for Evaluation and Research in Disaster Management: Conceptual, Operational, and Research Frameworks and Methodologies'.

Social and cultural Program

HRH Princess Margriet of the Netherlands opened the Congress which was followed by an outstanding social and cultural program. This included a spectacular reception with local musicians and actors bringing to life Rembrandt's *'The Nightwatch'*. Standing in front of a large replica of the painting, they played music and wore costumes befitting of the era. This dramatic display transported us to bygone times, but anchored us firmly in the Amsterdam locale.

Supporting Organisations

- Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport
- Netherlands Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations
- Netherlands Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management
- Netherlands Ministry of Defence
- VU University Medical Centre
- World Health Organisation
- Pan-American Health Organisation
- Joint Commission International and Yale-New Haven Health Systems
- European Master in Disaster Medicine
- The Regional Medical Emergency Preparedness and Planning Office GHOR Amsterdam

16th World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine

Plans are underway for the 16th World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine which will be held at the Victoria Conference Centre, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada from May 12-15, 2009.

The Organizing Committee is currently working on topic areas. Potential Topics for the 2009 WCDEM Congress include, but are not limited to:

- Pandemics, Epidemics, and Infectious Diseases
- Mass Gatherings: Olympic Games, Large Scale Events
- Safe Hospitals
- Terrorism - Biological and others
- Natural Disasters: Water, Wind, Wild Fires, and Earthquakes
- Refugees and Disasters
- Psychosocial Issues related to Disasters
- Paediatrics and Disasters
- The role of EMS in Disasters
- Civilian Military Collaboration

For further information on the 16th World Congress, please visit: <http://www.wcdem2009.org/>

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