

The world dental congress brings together 10,000 professionals in IFEMA

It is always a pride to see that a world or European congress comes to Spain. And it was the case when we saw FDI hold their world congress in Madrid. The largest dental and oral health congress in the world took place from September 29th to October 1st in IFEMA. We spoke with Diego Herrera, congress director of PCO Grupo Pacífico, about the keys and the evolution of this major congress.



Healthy numbers. It has been an important event, both for its scientific level and for the political decisions that were made. According to Diego Herrera, “the figures have been increasing as compared to last year’s: the congress brought together 9,400 professionals from 137 countries. We had 364 stands that occupied 4,538m2 net. An official program with 87 lectures, seven symposia, four hot topics, one year in review, eight ‘meet the expert’ sessions, plus a host of small meetings, hands-on workshops and business meetings.

A format to convey better. The format depends on what you want to transmit; it is not a question of choosing between small or large format, but of optimizing time and resources. Diego explains that “it is becoming increasingly difficult for health care professionals to take days to attend congresses; in the same way the industry makes a very important investment in the exhibition area. So if, for four days, we manage to generate a complete scientific program that groups large conferences with smaller and practical sessions, we get attendees to maximize their participation and companies to obtain a higher return on investment.”

THE DESIGN OF THE EVENT MUST OPTIMIZE TIME AND RESOURCES, SO THAT THE ATTENDEES MAKE THE MOST OF IT AND COMPANIES MAXIMIZE ROI

Networking dimension. Enabling zones and spaces to interact and exchange knowledge in more relaxed formats is imperative. “Although the educational part occupies, more and more, all the time of the congress, we had networking areas distributed in the pavilions and with the suitable furniture to facilitate spontaneous meetings. This exchange of scientific information between attendees is fundamental and generates future collaborations which are very interesting for the specialty”, says Diego.





Generating community. To generate community in the congress (a key objective for medical societies that want committed members), an award presentation was organized that recognized projects of this discipline. On the other hand, the social program had a fundamental role: excursions in Madrid, Toledo or Aranjuez, cultural activities such as the visit to the Escorial or the Royal Monastery, among others. In addition, a gastronomic tour was designed through typical bars and taverns of Madrid in neighborhoods such as la Latina, la Cebada square or around Plaza Mayor, where attendees could taste tapas and wines. And as a finishing touch, the Night Party Dentist enlivened the night with DJ's in the Moss Room.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO INTEGRATE THE EXHIBITION AREA IN THE CONGRESS AS A FUNDAMENTAL PART OF IT

Education, experiences, technology in the commercial area. In halls 5 and 7, more than 200 manufacturers and distributors of dental products, companies such as Colgate, Zeiss, or Hox were present as sponsors or with large stands, and presented their innovations. We could observe that education is a great way to attract and retain people to stands as well as to position the company, but also to establish a dialogue to better understand the needs of doctors, according to Diego, "it is necessary to integrate the exhibition area in the congress as a fundamental part of it and not as an area to go a couple of times to have a coffee. To achieve this, we study the flows of delegates to generate an influx maintained during all hours of exposure and generate more participatory scientific activities in the exhibition area.

COMPANIES ASSOCIATE THEIR IMAGE TO THE DISCIPLINE VIA SCIENCE AND TRAINING

ELECTRONIC POSTERS ARE BASED ON A DIGITIZATION OF THE INFORMATION THAT FACILITATES ITS DIFFUSION AND LATER PUBLICATION

Sponsorship trends. Advertising is important and companies still want to associate their image to the event, in a serious and relevant, not frivolous way. According to Diego, “companies are increasingly choosing to link their participation to science and training. Congresses are becoming more scientific and less social, and sponsorships adapt to this evolution.”

Here are a few examples of actions by sponsors and exhibitors:

- ApexBrasil offered small conferences in its stand
- Zeiss installed a machine to experience the patient’s feeling. Designs for Vision designed a showcase to display their products as a sample.
- HDX enabled in its stand numerous projections of medical x-rays with the improvements in diagnostic studies of oral diseases.

Advantages of electronic posters. The main ones are the integration of new media such as high resolution photos or videos and the possibility of spread these posters in electronic formats. For Diego, it is a matter of managing the posters not only during the congress but in a way that can be published later, spread and even presented in a virtual library. This digitization of information also allows the collection of very interesting statistical data for both the scientific society and sponsoring companies. A point of view of the future, when we saw that many societies continue to opt, or even return to a paper format, that has its advantages.

Mounting challenges. When we talk about large congresses, with an XL exhibition area, setup and production can be challenging, a challenge that is managed between equipment and logistics. “The setup of a congress of this size in which we use three pavilions of IFEMA and which involved 364 stands is complex”, said Diego.

SIMPLE, FAST AND SECURE SYSTEMS ARE SOUGHT TO BETTER MANAGE COMMUNICATIONS

Technology applied to the congresses is fundamental.

An indisputable union; new technologies increasingly complement congresses. “Through our IT department, we seek to make registration systems more and more simple, fast and secure. However, where it has evolved most is in the management of scientific information. In a congress of these dimensions, many communications are received that must be evaluated and presented. These communications are the work of many professionals and part of the legacy of the congress. We have evolved our management system to accommodate new media (image, video, etc.) and the objective is not only to be able to receive and evaluate all these works, but also to take into account the presentation of the same in the congress and its diffusion later”.

Formats to connect people. What formats exist to generate this sacred networking during, before and after the conference? According to Diego, “congresses are becoming more and more interactive. The development of an app with integrated interactive voting for some sessions has made this participation much easier but delegates want even more. Taking advantage of the presence of experts of worldwide relevance, small format sessions of “meet the expert” were generated, that allow a more direct relationship. The presentation and discussion of scientific communications was also promoted by placing, in the exhibition area, a series of interactive screens where poster sessions were scheduled throughout the congress.

International Congress: Japan in Madrid. With a kanpai (toast), the Japan Night kicked off at the Intercontinental Hotel in Madrid to celebrate the traditional “Japanese Night”, an event organized by the Japanese Dental Association and the manufacturers of Yoshida. It was a pre-congress meeting opportunity between officials and delegates.

World Representation. FDI (the international dental federation) represents more than one million dentists worldwide, and brings together 200 member dental associations from some 130 countries. Founded in 1900, they have developed educational campaigns, awareness campaigns and initiatives aimed at advancing dentistry and oral health, such as the prevention of chronic diseases. They also have active relationships with the World Health Organization (WHO) and are a member of the World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA).