
Volume 14 - Issue 4, 2014 - Datebook

EAHM Congress Review

The European Association of Hospital Managers' 25th congress was held September 10-13 in Berlin. Moderated by Dr. Ralf Michael Schmitz, EAHM Education and Training, the ceremonial opening began with an outline of this year's theme 'Health Sector: Our role and responsibility'. Achieving a balance between the ethical responsibilities of healthcare and the economic factors in evidence represents a daily challenge, and as Dr. Schmitz explained, this congress aims to provide the opportunity for discussion and a platform for the exchange of ideas.

He then introduced Dr. Josef Dullings, President of the German Association of Hospital Managers (VKD), who in turn welcomed and thanked the participants, organisers and sponsors of the congress. As this EAHM congress was being held on a European level, Dr. Dullings pointed out that Europe got its name from Greek mythology, Europa meaning 'wide-gazing', and he suggested that the emphasis of the event be placed on looking ahead and identifying solutions for improved quality of care in the years to come.



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President of the EAHM

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Heinz Kölking, President of the EAHM, then took to the stage and highlighted the fact that this year's congress is the 25th, an anniversary shared with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Europe has undergone significant changes in recent years, and the past five years have shown a fundamental shift in the general direction of European politics. EU regulations and institutions are being increasingly criticised by the member states. The current political constellation opens an increased role for the EAHM association, and Mr. Kölking sees opportunities towards change of the current structure of healthcare. National and EU standards are responsible, and a balance needs to be found between the influencing factors such as the EU working time directives, the patient mobility directives, and local competitive factors. Within this context of change, each hospital needed strategies and strong management to achieve this, Mr. Kölking concluded.



Mr. Eric de Roodenbeke

CEO of the International Hospital Federation (IHF)

He handed over to Mr. Eric de Roodenbeke, CEO of the International Hospital Federation (IHF), who presented 'Hospitals: Facing Austerity and Ageing'. The OECD perspective of austerity for healthcare will remain in place for the foreseeable future, which makes management ever more important. Current healthcare trends are not sustainable, and the major reason in the change of pattern of care and age is the upcoming big 'Silver Tsunami' wave. Ageing and multichronic conditions are impacting healthcare and creating a burden of disease in the developed world. The role of hospitals in healthcare expands across multiple dimensions, and according to Mr. de Roodenbeke, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, as location, culture and infrastructure play a significant role in each individual country's challenges. The next speaker was Mr. Lutz

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Stroppe, Secretary of State, Federal Ministry of Health, Germany, who pointed out that the healthcare industry had an increasing responsibility for quality and economic efficiency in the country's economy. Ageing factors are influencing future dynamics, however, and to sustain the current high standards and extensive catalogue of services, Germany needed to concentrate on three tasks: defining the true need for patient-centred care, allocating financial means efficiently, and embracing innovative framework and digital technologies. There was a need to keep the focus on people and not to divert the attention to technology, as was frequently the case.

Mario Czaja, Senator for Health and Social Affairs, Berlin, followed Mr. Stroppe's presentation with an overview of the role that healthcare plays in Berlin. In recent years, Berlin has grown in importance for this sector, with an increasing number of pharmaceutical and medical companies establishing a base in the city. Due to differences prevalent in each locality in Germany, discussions on a nationwide level made very little sense with government allocated hospital investment varying between €60 and €18 per inhabitant, depending on the city, and concluded that geriatric care would need to become the focus in the years to come.

It was then the turn of renowned independent scientist Leo A. Nefiodow to present his work on 'The Sixth Kondratieff – The New, Long Wave of the Economy', a contribution which is included in the Management Matrix section of this issue in the article 'Health – The Economic Growth Engine of the 21st Century' (see page 40).

The afternoon was dedicated to presentations outlining the status quo in Europe and included a podium discussion on economic efficiency. The World Health Economic Forum (WHEF) organised by Entscheiderfabrik was held simultaneously, exploring policymaking and IT, economics and IT and other topics, while the satellite events included a psychiatry workshop with contributions from Germany and Belgium.

The theme of lectures held on the following morning was 'Responsibility for Patients and Staff'. Among them was Dr. Áine Carroll's contribution on quality in healthcare, and her article 'Clinical Leadership and the Challenge of Change' can be found in the Management Matrix of this issue (see page 38).

In the afternoon the focus shifted to the responsibility of the health industry, with presentations on the importance of the healthcare ecosystem and sustainable healthcare. The WHEF continued in parallel, business and IT, medical engineering as well as infrastructure and IT were discussed, while the workshop was held on the challenge of infection prophylaxis.

The congress closed with the EAHM's general meeting, during which elections were held for the period 2014-2018. Gerry O'Dwyer was voted incoming president, taking over from Heinz Kölling, who has successfully led the association over the past four years.



Published on : Sat, 8 Nov 2014