

The 2019 EHMA Annual Conference



Set within the beautiful and relaxing city of Espoo, Finland, the 2019 EHMA Annual Conference – themed ‘Health Management 2.0’ took place. The event was hosted at the Helsinki University Hospital (HUS) and National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) in Dipoli, Aalto University on the 17th – 19th June 2019.

The conference opened with the welcome and orientation talk delivered by Mrs. Anu Partanen followed by an introductory lecture by Prof. Federico Lega, EHMA President, Dr. Markku Makijarvi, Chief Medical Officer, Helsinki and Ussimaa Hospital district and Dr. Marina Erhola, Deputy Director General, The National Institute for Health & Welfare, Finland.

The event brought together educators, researchers, managers and healthcare professionals from around the world to share their research, experiences and thoughts on how to prepare and equip the healthcare industry for the adoption of the many technological advances being made as we move towards the 21st century.

The topics discussed and debated included value-based healthcare, the need for advanced digital health education, workforce issues, specialist resources, health systems and policies, barriers affecting the adoption of new technology, along with identifying significant trends that are occurring. Sustainability and digital health were very high on most lectures agenda's throughout most of the three-day event.

Most evident within the sessions was the need for health professionals to adapt more quickly and have a greater understanding of new technologies and innovations being introduced. IT and data management is already having a substantial positive impact on healthcare, with outstanding results being claimed. These include patient monitoring and innovative systems to manage healthcare data. As these technologies become more advanced, they will enable a better link between patient and medical providers who will then be able to track a patient's condition and be notified promptly should irregularities or problems be indicated. Immediate reaction or intervention to an issue can make a significant impact on the patient chances of improving if not surviving. Significantly, what is also expected with the advancement of technology is a better connection between medical practitioners, enabling them to share patient's health data internationally and immediately. The progress of technology also allows practitioners to be updated on new developments opening up the potential for better treatments and medications to address conditions that may not be available to the practitioner currently due to location.

The essence of Value-based Healthcare was another hot topic, and a number of the discussions focussed on effective initiatives that could be introduced to improve patient clinical outcomes along with financial considerations. Healthcare organisations are all faced with tough operational and financial decisions as they move forward and many industry experts struggle to provide a detailed guidance around value-based care especially as Healthcare within Europe alone is one of the largest economic sectors accounting for approximately 17 million jobs. With population growth, ageing societies, and changing disease patterns all expected to drive higher demand for well-trained health workers in the next 15 years.

The aim of much of these discussions was to identify dynamic changes within education to enable health professionals to implement new models of care at a much lower cost. As patients are asked to take on more responsibility, healthcare workers should look towards providing the patient with better education for them to manage their conditions more effectively. By making the patient a partner alongside the health professional, we are potentially setting the scene for an effective partnership in achieving a cost-effective quality outcome.

Sustainability in Healthcare was raised in many of the discussions, and it was agreed that it is more important now than ever before. This is primarily brought on through a higher demand and expectation by the patients as they become more socially and environmentally aware. Many of the discussions focussed on delivering high-quality Healthcare without exhausting natural resources or causing severe ecological damage

while being cost effective and therefore accessible presenting even more significant challenges to innovation.

Overall the conference allowed many current processes that may be holding the health industry back from moving forward to be challenged, as well as questioning if specific areas are even ready for such advanced innovations to be adopted and if not, how best to make them available.

This year the organisers ensured that it wasn't all work with no play by introducing a new programme, which included different activities in the morning such as bird watching, running and sightseeing. An evening reception was held on the Monday at the Espoo Cultural Centre hosted by the Mayor of the City of Espoo and to round things off nicely, on the Tuesday rather than a formal social dinner delegates were invited to experience a cultural Finnish white nights and midsummer tradition by enjoying a barbeque in the Nuuksio National Park. Not only was this conference extremely interesting, it was very enjoyable and well worth attending.

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