

# The 18<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine

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The World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WADEM) holds regional and global congresses to advance disaster health and emergency medical education and research. The congresses are a platform for professionals and those interested in disaster and emergency health to network and exchange ideas. Key to each congress is the exchange of experiences among colleagues. The World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WCDEM) is held during odd-numbered years in different world venues. Each WCDEM focuses on a core scientific agenda with additional updates of new developments in the fields of disaster and emergency health. Support for WCDEM has come from key organizations including the World Health Organization, International Red Cross, Red Crescent, the US National Library of Medicine, universities of international stature, and national and regional medical and health societies.

The 18<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine was held this past May 28 through 31 in Manchester, United Kingdom. Attendance at the Congress numbered over 550. Among the many who helped organize the gathering, Doctors Darren Walter and Judith Fisher are to be especially congratulated for organizing a successful Congress. The Congress presented a robust agenda with sessions in three languages: French, Spanish, and English. Historic Manchester was an ideal venue for the Congress, allowing many attendees to have a first-time experience in the western region of the United Kingdom.

The Congress helped advance the fields of disaster and emergency medicine, with international audience sessions that explored the roles and actions of foreign medical teams responding to disasters, ethics in disaster response and management, disaster response standards, and disaster research. Participating in the Congress were members of the World Health Organization and the US National Library of Medicine. The scope of the Congress was broad, with ideas and experiences shared by the many who attended.

Particularly prominent during the Congress was the involvement of the WADEM Nursing Section. Meetings were held to further develop the principles of disaster nursing practice, disaster nursing education, and nursing research principles and techniques. Most important with the development of the Nursing Section is the global perspective that has been maintained. Nursing education, ethics and interaction during disasters has been advanced by the work of the nursing group. In addition to meetings specific to disaster nursing, the WADEM Nursing Section members were active in all aspects of the Congress.

Important sessions of the Congress were discussions and exploration of professionalism in humanitarian response. This issue has become an important aspect of disaster medicine with a number of recent papers published regarding the topic in both this and other journals. Sessions at the Congress provided further

support for development of an international standard of practice for humanitarian responders and organizations. Since the Haiti Earthquake of 2010, much has been done to initiate humanitarian response standards, and this work formed a solid foundation for exploration of ways to advance humanitarian standards during sessions at the Congress. The Congress also proved to be a platform for integration of the separate specialties of disaster medicine, emergency public health, and humanitarian action.

Sessions at the Congress were held to introduce and discuss the proposed Guidelines for Research and Evaluation of Disaster Health Emergencies. These sessions were well attended and interactive. Congress attendees showed solid interest in the dissemination of the Guidelines that have been developed. Adoption of the Guidelines by researchers and disaster professionals will advance the development of evidence gathering and presentation in disaster medical science.

Prehospital and emergency medicine sessions of the Congress were well attended with presentations and discussions covering broad areas of the field. The sessions allowed for discussion of specialized areas of prehospital care such as air transport and integration of newer medical technology. The use of ultrasound, metabolic testing for assessment of shock, and improved emergency methods such as the use of cell saver devices for high volume auto transfusion in hemorrhage states are some examples of the areas explored during the prehospital and emergency medicine sessions.

Medical support and management during mass-gathering events was a major area explored during Congress sessions. Congress participants with an interest in mass-gathering medicine and health were able to exchange experiences and research during Congress sessions dedicated to exploring the special area. These sessions added to the information base for this area of emergency public health. The importance of this area is reflected by the recent formation of the Mass Gathering Section of WADEM.

The psychosocial aspects of disaster medicine and health were emphasized by special Congress sessions. The evidence-based foundation for this area of disaster planning and response continues to develop and mature as was demonstrated by participants' discussions and presentations during the Congress. Most important is the ongoing development of multicultural and global principles for disaster psychosocial health initiatives.

Congratulations are extended to Michael Molly, who was recognized for the best oral presentation, and to Hiroshi Suginaka, who was recognized for best poster presentation at the Congress. A highlight of the Congress was the presentation of the Peter Safar award to Professor Douglas Chamberlain, a true pioneer in disaster and emergency medicine and renowned for his work and contributions in prehospital and resuscitation science.

The next WCDEM is slated for 2015 in Cape Town, South Africa. The scientific committee for the 19<sup>th</sup> South Africa WCDEM is already planning the Congress. It is expected that further development of the diverse areas reported above will be included in the core agenda for the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress, as well as

presentation and exploration of new topics and issues that develop during the coming two years.

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