

Editorial

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Improved Infection Control programs have the potential to dramatically reduce healthcare associated infections (HAI) in hospitals and healthcare facilities worldwide. These continue to take an even greater importance as a result of continuously emerging challenges. The rapid emergence of antibiotic resistance and an increase in critical patients with more invasive procedures make it important to revisit the field continuously. Knowledge and implementation of evidence based strategies, surveillance and audit are the key tools in trying to address the challenge posed by HAI. These strategies in turn need effective education of health care workers for their implementation. Better education is one of the key ways in achieving goals in Infection Control.

One method of education is through congresses and meetings that utilise the expertise of specialists in the field to impart information and knowledge. This is the aim of IFIC conferences, which are usually held on a yearly basis and organized jointly with member societies. Recent conferences were held in Budapest, Cape Town, Istanbul, Porec and Malta. They are characterized by the generous amount of time allotted to discussions and workshops with considerable interaction between the audience and invited experts. IFIC conferences are international in scope, with lecturers and participants from all over the world.

Conference registration fees are kept as affordable as possible, even for participants in limited resource settings. Several scholarships are awarded at each Congress. Applicants must submit an abstract and if chosen, awardees must present their paper in either oral or poster format. Preference is given to participants from settings with limited resources.

The Ninth International IFIC Congress held in Santiago Chile, marked a milestone in infection control education within Latin America and provided a concrete contribution to improve quality and safety through the infection prevention among health care facilities in this region. For the first time, it combined the annual meeting of the Chilean Infection Control Society with the Pan American as well as IFIC infection control conferences and made it possible to exchange experiences and information among many different cultures. It gave the participants a unique opportunity to share knowledge and experiences. The congress was a major success in many ways. It attracted more than 1000 delegates with 84 speakers from 49 countries. In excess of 200 abstracts were presented; 34 companies sponsored and supported the activity.

Several elements were key to this success, not least the hard and important work by the local organising

committee, the support of the speakers and, of course, the commitment of so many individuals, professionals and scientific societies all around the world. This enabled many delegates from Latin American, who may not have had the chance to participate in an international infection control congress, to participate in a global high quality meeting.

The Ninth Congress of the International Federation of Infection Control left unforgettable experiences –

both academic as well as social – amongst all who participated and will stay in the memory for many years. IFIC2008 set a benchmark for the future meetings to reach and surpass. This volume of IJIC brings to all its readers a small but significant sample of the very high quality contributions presented at this Congress. We hope it will not only inform, but wet readers' appetites for more, and perhaps be the incentive to bring them to our next congress in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 8-11 October 2009 (www.ific2009.com).