

The AsMA and the European Congress of Aerospace Medicine

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The largest, most comprehensive, and arguably most vigorously assessed academic meeting in aerospace medicine and human performance is our own Annual Scientific Meeting. The Association makes great efforts to improve and advance the quality and scope of this meeting. However, there are many other valuable meetings and conferences pertinent to our specialties. Over the last few years AsMA has sought to engage with the societies and organizations holding such meetings. We cannot support everything but, where appropriate, it has been determined that there are contributions we can make that will enhance the meeting and have long term value for our membership.

The first level of engagement is for the leadership of AsMA to attend a pertinent conference, as representatives of the Association. This "flies the flag" for AsMA and brings it to the attention of the delegates. Engagement may be low key, simply by attending the meeting and interacting with other delegates or more formally through discussions held at a manned table. With both approaches we answer questions about what we do and introduce the benefits of membership in the Association to those who had never considered it before. We have done this on a number of occasions at the annual International Congress of Aviation & Space Medicine, most recently in Oxford, England, in September 2015. We have offered a similar opportunity to the organizers of these Congresses, which are supported by the International Academy of Aviation & Space Medicine, at our meetings. It is a help to them and a service to our members. The next step is for the Association to sponsor contributors to the scientific programme or Congresses or other meetings. Thus, AsMA is seen to be providing key expertise at the meeting and showcasing the range and depth of the knowledge and experience we have within our Association.

Now, for the first time we have gone a step further, becoming a full partner at an aerospace medicine meeting other than our own. At the time of writing this has just taken place at the 5th European Congress of Aerospace Medicine in Oslo, Norway. The previous European Congresses have been held every two years under the auspices of the European Society of Aerospace Medicine (ESAM) and a local aeromedical society. In 2016 that local partner was the Norwegian Association of Aviation Medicine. AsMA provided much of the infrastructure, including the registration process through our website, collecting the registration fees, and the bookings for related activities. It also furnished three eminent speakers, Drs. Mike Berry, Quay Snyder, and Paul Young. The AsMA Executive Director manned the registration desk and answered the very many questions that cropped up, supported by the Assistant to the Editor of our Journal, and I attended in my capacity as President.

The very presence of such a visible AsMA input invited enquiries from delegates who had never been to our own meetings but were interested to ask much more about them. In welcoming delegates to the meeting on the first day I was able to emphasize the role AsMA plays around the world, not only in the science and clinical practice of aerospace medicine and human performance, but also in advocacy and representation. At the end of the Congress I was able to describe our own meetings with their multiple parallel oral and poster sessions over four days and the major plenary lectures and to invite delegates in Oslo to consider joining us in Denver next year.

The European Congress in Oslo was held in an excellent facility just outside and overlooking the city itself. The hotel is close to the former Winter Olympic ski jump or, as one local described it, Norway's spacecraft launch facility! Most delegates stayed in the conference hotel and found it very comfortable and convenient. This allowed the maximum opportunity to attend everything, view the poster presentations, have the chance to meet people of like minds, and extend professional networks. The programme ran over two and a half days. The content was an impressive mix of invited speakers and peer reviewed oral presentations from those who had successfully submitted abstracts. In addition, there were selected poster presentations on each of the two full days. This was therefore a good opportunity for a broad range of material to be presented but also allowed themes to be developed. It will come as no surprise to those currently active in aerospace medicine that the topic of mental health featured strongly, but so, too, did space medicine, and an interesting mix of other subjects. The challenges of appropriate medical supervision of pilots was discussed and this appears to be an area where there are potential tensions in addressing the aspirations of some pilots while seeking to maintain levels of medical oversight.

Overall the meeting was a great success, both in terms of its content and also in the huge increase in the delegate attendance compared with previous European Congresses. Clearly the involvement of AsMA increased the awareness of this meeting by our U.S. members, supported aspects of the scientific programme, and made a very positive step-change in the overall registration process. AsMA also received thanks for being present and so

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supportive from some who told us that they have never had the opportunity to come to our annual scientific meeting in the United States, yet they have been able to benefit from this link. Furthermore, we recruited new or returning members to our Association, boosting our membership number and broadening still further the spread of our contribution to the practice of aerospace medicine and human performance. I hope too that by raising the profile of AsMA within this community we will see a rise

in our delegate numbers in the spring in Denver from some who have never previously ventured to join us.

As 2016 draws to a close we would like to wish all of our members greetings of the season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the AsMA community for their support and condolences for my family's recent loss.