

International Meetings: Global Partnerships

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"So, there I was...." Many aviation stories, indeed stories in general, begin that way. There I was, on the banks of the beautiful and historic Danube River, in the ancient European city of Budapest, Hungary. It was a few days before the 2019 International Congress of Aviation and Space Medicine or ICASM 2019 in Debrecen, Hungary.

The Magyar culture dates back over 1100 years in the Carpathian basin. Invasions by the Germans, the Mongols, the Turks, the Hapsburgs of Austria. Military adventures into northern Italy, Slovenia, Serbia, Slovakia, Romania, even Czech areas, giving rise to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Then the fateful assassination of Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand ignited the Great War, World War I. I couldn't help but be awed by the history of Budapest and this nation. As a retired military officer, I soaked in the past centuries of military history and, particularly, the last century of WWI and WWII events, including the German and Russian invasions and their bloody road to freedom. It was humbling to say the least.

And there was something to satisfy my medical side, also. Buried in the depths of the Buda mountain, the Hospital in the Rock was an amazing glimpse into the medicine of last century and is truly a wonder to behold. Another medical tidbit was the museum celebrating Ignaz Semmelweis, a Hungarian born obstetrician and an early pioneer of antiseptic procedures. Perhaps you recall that during the 1840s, he studied puerperal fever mortality rates for clinics at Vienna's Maternity Institution. Using only observational statistics (since Germ Theory would not gain wide acceptance until Pasteur and Koch), Dr. Semmelweis was able to drastically reduce mortality by implementing chlorine hand washing in mid-May 1847. Such history.

ICASM 2019 in Debrecen was a wonderful meeting: great science, great venue, great hosts, great food, great beers and wines, great hospitality (Fig. 1). Flight surgeons the world over are all wrestling similar issues—those human issues of providing advice and care to our unique populations. I could not help but feel a deep kinship listening to our colleagues discuss aeromedical issues and data from their countries that so mirror those presented and discussed at AsMA's Annual Meeting. AsMA serves as the global "hub" of our specialty of aerospace medicine. It is a vital center of professional knowledge, education, fellowship, and networking for our practitioners. And AsMA has a significant



Fig. 1. AsMA President, Joe Ortega, attends ICASM 2019 in Debrecen, Hungary.

international membership that helps extend its reach and influence into many international venues.

AsMA's membership is internationally diverse, but for some of our fellow Aviation and Space Medicine practitioners in some nations, participation in AsMA is not within reach. To address this, our Global Liaison Outreach Committee (GLOC) developed an initiative for physicians in emerging nations. The AsMA Council authorized a 2-year pilot program to test the viability of this new "allied" membership.

The new membership will be open to individuals from countries with emerging economies and provide a reduced annual membership fee, as well as reduced meeting registration fee. The goal is to encourage participation in AsMA's annual meeting for networking and improving aeromedical knowledge. The applicant will simply have to show citizenship from one of the low to low-middle income countries on the United Nations "World Economic Situation and Prospects" report. This 2019 list has 79 countries in those categories (Table I). These members can be full members of AsMA. Like the student membership, it will include access to the electronic journal and reduced fees for the Annual Meeting. AsMA will not provide any assistance with hotel or travel; however, there are several organizations that sponsor "scholarships" to help offset these costs.

The GLOC will do outreach to and monitor the membership from these nations to gauge the participation from our colleagues and impacts on AsMA. The committee is due to report the results of the pilot to the Council on May 23, 2021, during the Annual Meeting in Reno, NV. We are very excited for this initiative and look forward to growing the vital network of aviation and space medicine practitioners.

AsMA's membership is an amazing and unique resource for any medical practitioner of our specialty, anywhere on or off our planet. But AsMA is, by no means, the only place to find international networking and professional kinship.

In recent years, the European Society of Aerospace Medicine or ESAM has gained prominence as an umbrella group coordinating European aerospace medical interests across national and organizational boundaries. AsMA has supported and even co-sponsored some Congresses with ESAM over the past few years.



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Table I. Economies by per Capita GNI: Low Income and Lower Middle Income (UN 2018).

LOW INCOME		LOWER MIDDLE INCOME	
Afghanistan	Liberia	Angola	Mauritania
Benin	Madagascar	Armenia	Mongolia
Burkina Faso	Malawi	Bangladesh	Morocco
Burundi	Mali	Bhutan	Myanmar
Central African Republic	Mozambique	Bolivia	Nicaragua
Chad	Nepal	Cambodia	Pakistan
Comoros	Niger	Cameroon	Papua New Guinea
Democratic People's Rep. of Korea	Rwanda	Cabo Verde	Philippines
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Senegal	Congo	Republic of Moldova
Eritrea	Sierra Leone	Côte d'Ivoire	São Tomé and Príncipe
Ethiopia	Somalia	Djibouti	Solomon Islands
Gambia	Togo	Egypt	Sri Lanka
Guinea	Uganda	El Salvador	Sudan
Guinea-Bissau	United Republic of Tanzania	Ghana	Swaziland
Haiti	Zimbabwe	Georgia	Syrian Arab Republic
		Guatemala	Tajikistan
		Honduras	Timor-Leste
		India	Tunisia
		Indonesia	Ukraine
		Jordan	Uzbekistan
		Kenya	Vanuatu
		Kiribati	Viet Nam
		Kyrgyz Republic	Yemen
		Lao People's Democratic Republic	Zambia
		Lesotho	

These meetings are yet another way to network with global peers in aerospace medicine.

Our relationship with the venerable International Academy of Aviation and Space Medicine (IAASM) is strong and vibrant. The Academy was founded in 1955 to promote new knowledge in aerospace medicine and to foster international cooperation and collaboration among those devoted to education and research in our field. Every fall, it sponsors annual Congresses around the world.

After years of planning, next September in Paris these three Aerospace Medicine organizations (AsMA, IAASM, and ESAM), along with the host Société Francophone de Médecine Aérospatiale (SOFRAMAS), will cosponsor a first ever collaboration, sponsoring the first "International Conference of Aerospace Medicine" or ICAM 2020 from 24–26 September. Don't miss this one-of-a-kind event in the City of Lights.

Congratulations to Dr. Andrea Wasser and the entire organizing committee for a wonderful Hungarian Congress. As ICASM

2019 wrapped up, an AsMA corporate sponsor, AMST, sponsored a separate meeting on international aerospace medicine topics. It was AMST's 7th User Congress, also in Debrecen this year, chaired by Dr. Erich Roedig (needs no introduction) and Dr. Sándor "Alex" Szabo of the Hungarian Air Force. Congratulations to them for another great, science-filled aerospace medicine event in Hungary.

Aerospace medicine is a team activity. And it's a global endeavor. While AsMA represents the specialty within the organized structure of American medicine, it is also the hub of global activities in this unique medical specialty. AsMA has a fantastic group of international professionals as fellow AsMA members and peers. We look forward to the new GLOC initiative extending our international AsMA family. AsMA remains proud to partner with our "sister organizations" to further international cooperation in aviation safety and aerospace medicine.

Keep 'em flying.