

## **Charting the course towards new horizons for pharmacy**

*The 79th World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences takes place in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, later this year. Graeme Smith spoke to the programme organisers to find out what participants can expect*

Pharmacy practice, science and education are changing. Wherever you are in the world, innovations are affecting the roles of healthcare professionals, scientists, researchers and educators.

New opportunities and challenges arise all the time, and the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) wants all stakeholders in the pharmacy profession to be prepared for the changes ahead. Michael Ward, discipline leader for pharmacy education at the University of South Australia school of pharmacy and medical sciences, and co-chair of FIP's 2019 World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences programme committee, says that the ever-increasing pace of developments in technology is changing the delivery of health care, which creates many exciting opportunities, but also some challenges. He adds: "To ensure that pharmacists are able to maximise their full potential in contributing to patient care it is really very important that they not only navigate changes as these develop around them but also that they have a view of what is possible in the future so that they can actively participate in setting the professional destination of pharmacy."

Co-chair Lars-Åke Söderlund, who is head of national customers and new businesses at Apoteket AB, Sweden, agrees. "Change is dynamic," he says, "so we need to maintain momentum and dedicate our resources to assure healthcare delivery to our customers and patients. People need to be empowered and included in the process of care."

"New horizons for pharmacy — navigating winds of change" is the theme of the FIP congress to be held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 22 to 26 September 2019. Speakers will explore topics that will help pharmacists navigate change. Some will examine new trends in science, practice and education; others will focus more specifically on new roles, opportunities and responsibilities for pharmacists.

### **Empowering patients**

Pharmacists cannot evolve in isolation; it is imperative that patients have a say, too. So a plenary session entitled "FIP listens — patients talk" is a must-attend event for congress participants. Likewise, a session entitled "Patient empowerment — myth or reality?" is likely to generate some interesting information for pharmacists to ponder. Patient empowerment is growing and continues to shape how health care is being delivered. According to Dr Söderlund, three important factors are driving consumer behaviour: (i) the rise in digital health; (ii) a shift in attitude around the patient-provider relationship; and (iii) cost constraints. This session will focus on all of that. Dr Söderlund says: "An empowered healthcare consumer has the knowledge, ability, resources and motivation to identify and make healthy choices."

### **New horizons**

Part of FIP's raison d'être is to anticipate new developments, and the Abu Dhabi congress will do that in a session entitled "One step beyond new horizons in science, practice and education". The session aims to challenge concepts about the future of pharmacy and reflect on how pharmacy's role will evolve. Dr Ward believes that this session encapsulates what FIP congresses are all about, namely, the integration of science, practice and education. "These three elements are absolutely critical and must work together," he says.

A further session on "Realising pharmacy's potential — putting successful plans in place" is another highlight. It looks to a future where pharmacist services are an essential part of a people-powered, integrated model of care and are delivered in innovative ways that ensure equitable access to medicines and services. Dr Söderlund says this session will describe success stories and provide a "tool box" for participants who wish to put similar plans in place in their countries. "The plans offer an opportunity to define the direction of pharmacy services over the next five years and set priorities," he says. "More importantly, it signals the intention to make the most of pharmacists' skills for the benefit of all citizens."

### **Young professionals**

Pharmacy cannot evolve without its young professionals and FIP places special emphasis on their needs through its Young Pharmacists Group (YPG). Programme committee member Toyin Tofade, dean of the college of pharmacy at Howard University, Washington DC, USA, is excited about a YPG leadership development workshop that will take place. Pointing out that this is the second such event, she says: "Feedback from last year's participants included that the workshop was 'life-changing'. This year we're scaling up to allow more to participate and benefit from the programme. Young people are our future. We must invest in them and in their development."

Dr Söderlund also wants young pharmacists to attend. Reaching out to them, he says: "Come for the whole congress, come for one day. But come! This is your chance. It is all about learning from each other." Dr Ward adds that there is "no better forum for a young practitioner than the FIP congress".

### **Collaboration**

The congress programme has been designed to encourage collaboration between practitioners, scientists and educators. There is a session on "Integrating science and professional practice in pharmacy degrees" at which participants will learn about developments in this area in Australia, South Africa, USA, and the UK. Another session will look at "The power of working together" which will highlight successful stories of interprofessional education and collaborative practice from different parts of the world. Programme committee member Mary Wang, director of pharmacy at Shin Kong Memorial Hospital in Taipei, China Taiwan, says the congress provides opportunities for interaction and collaboration, and the eventual delivery of essential, equitable, relevant and valuable services.

Dr Söderlund describes the congress as the “Olympics of pharmacy”, where the latest findings in research, education and practice are presented, and where “everyone is a winner”.

### **Learn, grow and shine**

Times change, and pharmacy practice, science and education need to reflect that. Congress participants will have the opportunity to learn about how their specific areas of interest might change in the future and how they can prepare themselves to deal with these changes. Dr Söderlund says participants will be able to “learn, grow and shine”: learn from latest findings; grow with newly acquired skills, competencies and networks; and shine when they present their own findings and research. “It is a must to attend the congress in today’s world of rapid change,” he declares.

So what are you waiting for? Join your colleagues in Abu Dhabi and set sail on your journey towards new horizons!

Suggested pullquote: “Define the direction of pharmacy over the next five years and set priorities.”