**Embrace the technological revolution and bring new technologies into your practice**

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*FIP’s 80th World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences will take place in Seville, Spain, later this year. Graeme Smith spoke to some of the programme organisers to find out what participants can expect and asked a few FIP officers what they are looking forward to.*

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Pharmacy and health care in general are undergoing a global technological revolution. Wherever in the world practitioners live, the ongoing needs driving progress are the same, namely, to reduce the costs of care, meet higher consumer expectations, avoid preventable deaths, reduce wastage, increase efficiency, predict disease faster and more accurately, and develop new drugs and treatments.

These are the issues that will be explored at the 2020 FIP World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, which will take place in Seville, Spain, from 13 to 17 September. In keeping with the congress theme — “The technological revolution: Impact on pharmacy and health care” — FIP wants, through the programme, to empower congress participants to embrace new technologies and bring them to their practice.

Lars-Åke Söderlund, head of national customers and new businesses at Apoteket AB, Sweden, and a co-chair of the congress programme committee, says that new technologies will, for example: enable storage of structured patient records; facilitate electronic prescribing, dispensing and administration of medicines; automate medicines handling in the supply chain; and provide tools for monitoring medicines efficacy and safety in use. All of this will, he adds, “ultimately enable pharmacists to contribute to the provision of high-quality care while ensuring patients make the most of their medicines”.

Programme committee co-chair Michael Ward, who is discipline leader for pharmacy education at the University of South Australia school of medicine, adds that a real coalesecence of the fields of biological sciences, computation power and data analysis is starting to have major impacts on health care. “But we are really just at the beginning of understanding what might become possible,” he says.

Congress participants will learn about and discuss how developments in data handling are making personalised medicine both possible and feasible. Ulf Janzon, a pharmacist from Sweden and president of FIP’s Industrial Pharmacy Section, says: “To be able to choose the best possible treatment for individual patients, taking all available information into account will make health care better, more efficient and less costly.” But the structures for sharing data have to be developed. He is particularly looking forward to the FIP congress session on “Hammock health care: The future of pharmacy”, at which how to use big data to move care from hospital to home, and the ethical issues surrounding that, will be discussed.

**Focus on digital**

Digital health will be an important focus for the congress. Mr Söderlund says that it provides a great number of opportunities for pharmacy. Consumers are becoming increasingly used to using mobile apps and wearable technologies, especially in situations that require frequent monitoring of health status, such as in diabetes or hypertension. “Digital technologies offer tools to get to know and track the most conscious and demanding consumers, keeping them company during the entire treatment period as well as in the search for a healthier lifestyle,” he adds. “The challenge for pharmacy will be to have an available integrated database with a deep customer profile.”

Congress participants can learn more about digital developments at a number of different sessions. One such is “Key competencies for a digital pharmaceutical future”, which will identify what students, practitioners and scientists will need in order to be leaders in the digital age. John Pieper, president and professor at the St Louis College of Pharmacy, United States, and president of FIP’s Academic Pharmacy Section, says: “This information is critical for educators to understand because we provide education and training across the spectrum of learners from students to experienced practitioners.”

A must-attend event, which will set the scene for the whole congress, is the plenary session “New healthcare — the beginning”. It will cover the “fourth industrial revolution” (which is characterised by new technologies that are fusing the physical, digital and biological worlds in ways that impact on all disciplines, economies and industries), pharmacy’s role in it and the profession’s contribution to universal health coverage. Mr Söderlund says the whole congress will be full of inspiring presentations covering topics from pharmacy innovation to children’s health, healthy ageing, and how to support countries to change and develop their health systems. “They are all so exciting, it is difficult to choose among them.”

**Everyone’s a winner**

Young professionals are the future, and Professor Ward says that there is no better forum for them than the FIP congress. “The breadth of practice, science and education makes for a well balanced programme with opportunities to network across all areas of the profession.” Mr Söderlund says it is essential that our future pharmacy leaders help shape pharmacy’s future by attending the congress and providing their views on every aspect of it while at the same time developing new values and creating new professional relationships. As evidenced by the variety of congress sessions available, an important facet of any FIP world congress is the bringing together of pharmacy practioners, scientists and educators. Indeed this is one of unique elements of FIP itself, says Professor Ward. Mr Söderlund adds that as everything to do with patient care becomes more connected so, too, do pharmacy practice, science and education. He likens the FIP congress to the Olympic Games, but with one exception — “Everyone is a winner!”

Alongside the FIP congress, the 11th Global Academic Leaders Forum (GALF) will take place on 13–14 September. This year’s GALF hot topic is “Culture of innovation”. Sandra Carey, global president at McCann Health Global Pharmacy, will facilitate an interactive workshop on fostering an innovative culture. GALF participants will also be able to join the FIP Academic Institutional Membership World Café, where global academic leaders will discuss and find solutions to common academic leadership challenges in a roundtable setting.

**Super-attractive venue**

If the above has not whetted your appetite, perhaps the glories of Seville itself will tempt you. Consider the city’s Arabic influences, its gastronomy, its architecture and its internationally recognised landmarks. The city is also the world capital of flamenco. “Seville has everything that makes a congress venue super-attractive and the congress itself extremely successful,” says Mr Söderlund. So, what are you waiting for? Sign up today!