

A very special meeting



Imagine you are an invited speaker at the international Midland Ophthalmological Society (MOS) and Pantheo Eye Centre, Annual Congress in Limassol Cyprus, April 2016. You land late on Friday evening leaving the cold, wind and rain of the UK behind you.

At 8.15 the next morning you are seated in the conference hall with the other 100 participants waiting for the event to commence. Behind the screen, in front of you, the window reveals a panoramic view of a glorious bright blue, absolutely cloudless, sky. Slowly lowering your gaze, branches of palm trees waft across your view, and then slightly lower... your eyes fall on the most brilliantly blue sea you have ever seen. Now be honest – it's not appraisal time after all – what is your only thought? Of course - to grab your certificate of attendance, swimming costume and towel, and dash for the beach. But on approaching the charming and efficient ladies at the registration desk your resolve shrinks, you mumble something incomprehensible and slink slowly back to the conference room where you sit obediently for the next two days.

The two-day MOS - Pantheo Annual Congress has now been running for 9 years under the aegis of three organisations: the Pantheo Eye Centre, Limassol, The University of Nicosia Medical School (part of St George's Medical School, London) and the Midland Ophthalmological Society. The meeting is housed in a splendid Limassol hotel where the delegates can stay, and adding an irrelevant note to the education-hungry ophthalmologist, there are several superb swimming pools.

Miss Marie Tsaloumas from Birmingham and Mr Theo Potamitis ex-Birmingham and now Cyprus are the organisational driving forces, massively aided by Dr Katia Papastavrou. Participants and delegates include ophthalmologists from Cyprus, the UK and other European countries. Students from The University of Nicosia Medical School also attend as part of their ophthalmic training. The international group of invited speakers are all well-recognised in their respective fields.

The meeting starts at the Pantheo Eye Centre with presentations by local ophthalmologists and a quiz for the

visitors. This is followed by the welcoming reception. Each congress has a theme which has included in the past: "Debates in Ophthalmology", "Management of Complications", "Anterior meets Posterior" and "New Horizons".

Recently, a session on medicolegal issues was tentatively introduced which was – surprising to me – a great success. There are few other meetings with such a breadth of topics: medical retina, genetics, neuro-ophthalmology, electrophysiology, paediatrics, along with a wide range of surgical topics. One of the highlights for this writer was a splendid sans slides talk on the "placebo effect". In 2015 the debate theme pitched speakers against each other on such topics as – "internal vs external DCR", "Does vitrectomy for macular oedema work?" (yes vs no) and "DSAEK vs DMEK". This writer still smarts from being macerated by Manoj Parulekar of Birmingham and outvoted by the participants in the debate on the "Great paediatric cataract massacre".

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The very last session of the meeting is one of my favourites as local trainees, medical and nursing students make presentations – fresh, excellent and humbling.

At 5.30 pm or thereabouts, the blinds are lifted and at last that glorious view of the blue sky and sea comes again into view - just in time for a short swim and then out for the evening. The conference meal is held in a different location each year – 2016 in a country winery, 2015 on the beach (with swimming) and on other occasions in various historical locations. Dancing, a term used quite improperly, is usually required. The next morning you find yourself at 8.30 back in the conference hall ready for action.

So, how to sum up this meeting? A superb balance of reviews and updates, undoubtedly by well-established speakers in their fields, makes it one of the major highlights in the ophthalmic calendar and is registered for CPD. The breadth of topics makes it ideal for updates on topics away from your own subspecialty. Above all, the organisers ensure that it is friendly and welcoming at every level. Like every conference not every delegate stays the full course, but at this congress, despite the external attractions, most do – what better attestation. For once, my wife and my appraiser both speak as one – this meeting is a must and the MOS - Pantheo Annual Congress is already written into my Personal Development Plan for 2017.

Professor Alastair Fielder
(delegate and speaker)