

World Congress appetisers for pharmacists on the frontline

What's in store at this year's World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences? The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) gave a community pharmacist a preview of the programme. Here's what he thought.

As you go about your daily work helping patients make the most of their medicines it is unlikely that you will face real danger. Patients might be difficult at times, but actual physical harm to you, your staff or your business rarely occurs.

Yet violence in pharmacies and the fear of it, is increasing. The frontline nature of their work means that pharmacists and their staff can be faced with aggression and abuse by members of the public — bad behaviour that is often exacerbated by the stress unwell patients are under. At the world pharmacy congress this year, there

will be a joint community pharmacy/Red Cross session on “Violence against pharmacies”, which will help us to be better prepared should such unpleasant situations arise. Participants will be able to find out about improving pharmacy security and minimising the risks of violence against their business and staff.

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DÜSSELDORF 2015
FIP WORLD CONGRESS
29 September - 3 October



Pharmacy at the really sharp end

On the subject of violence, spare a thought, also, for our colleagues in countries in crisis. There, healthcare professionals, including pharmacists (and not only those carrying out humanitarian work) are at risk of violence on a daily basis. This is why the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement has launched its “Healthcare in danger” project.

The project, a global initiative led by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), has the ambitious objective to make health care delivery safer by mobilising experts to develop practical measures for decision-makers, the military, humanitarian organisations and, importantly, health professionals. Bruce Eshaya-Chauvin, the project’s medical adviser, will outline the work of the project.

An ICRC report published in 2014 analysed some 1,800 violent incidents against healthcare gathered within a year in 23 countries. Healthcare workers were found to be the main victims. “On this basis, the project endeavours to look for solutions at the national level and engage with the international community,” Dr Eshaya-Chauvin explains. “Pharmacists are an essential resource in emergencies and we would like to have them associated to the project both at a global and national level.” At the congress, you can hear more about the project and how you can become involved.

Keeping it green

When you are dispensing medicines do you think about what you can do to make your practice more environmentally friendly? The issue of pharmaceuticals

and the environment is something that concerns everyone, but how can green pharmacy practice be encouraged?

Eeva Teräsalmi, vice-president of FIP’s Board of Pharmaceutical Practice, will chair a session exploring the challenges and limitations of such practices. Moreover, she will present a document on the issues that are under development by FIP and outline the responsibilities pharmacists have in different practice settings and in the whole medication use process from prescribing through to disposing of waste medicines.

For example, “Packs must be of a suitable size to ensure consumers do not collect unused medicines,” she says. “Education of other healthcare providers on environmental aspects of medicines use is also hugely important.”

Attend this session if you want to keep it green!





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Food for thought

Patients are always being told to take this medicine before food, this medicine with food or that medicine after food. But how many pharmacists actually stop to think about exactly how food impacts on the effects of medicines? A session entitled “To eat or not to eat: how does food impact on drug efficacy?” will look at the issues.

Speaker Abdul Basit, from University College London, says: “Gastrointestinal physiology is dynamic and complex at the best of times and a multitude of known variables can affect overall bioavailability of drugs delivered via the oral route. Yet while the influences of food and beverage intake have been extensively documented in the wider literature, specific information on their effects remains sporadic.”

Fellow speaker Giovanni Pauletti, associate professor at the University of Cincinnati, will delve into how food components affect drug

solubility. He says: “As many of today’s drugs exhibit limited aqueous solubility, the presence, or absence, of specific food components has the potential to dramatically impact on rate and extent of absorption from the gastrointestinal tract. Consequently, patient counselling regarding the appropriate timing of prescribed drug regimens with food is vital to assure desired therapeutic responses.”

On the session menu will be food-drug interactions, the effect of high fat meals on oral availability of drugs with low aqueous solubility, how drug absorption is affected by nutrients and why counselling to ensure effective drug management is important.

Emerging diseases

A particular crisis the world faces currently is the spread of the Ebola virus. Many healthcare workers from developed countries have rushed to help in the fight against the disease, some

contracting the infection themselves. One of them, a Scottish nurse who worked in Sierra Leone, has recently been released disease-free from hospital, showing that with the right care, Ebola patients can be cured. But now we are hearing reports that the virus may be mutating and there is particular concern that a more highly infectious airborne virus may emerge.

Can pharmacists help? Yes, they can. Their contribution to handling the Ebola crisis is the subject of an FIP advisory, which will be discussed at a congress session on emergent diseases. Those attending will learn how to apply the advisory within their countries and what pharmacists can do. They will also hear Sierra Leone pharmacist Mohamed Conteh-Barrat’s actual experience of dealing with the disease in his country. He will focus on pharmacy-led interventions and will explain how pharmacy preparedness for the epidemic was increased.

Information dissemination

is crucial, particularly in areas of high illiteracy and community pharmacists are central to that. Mr Conteh-Barrat will explain how pharmacists can deliver information at a community level. He says: “Successful control of the epidemic hinges on proper coordination with all stakeholders, the pharmacy profession being key among them.”

If you want to learn more about how pharmacists can help stop the spread of Ebola, this session is for you.

When and where

The 2015 World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences will take place in Germany. It offers 230 hours of sessions given by 220 experts from 40 different countries. There is much of interest to community pharmacists at this year’s congress and, if the above has whetted your appetite, Düsseldorf is the place to be from 29 September to 3 October. Find out more at www.fip.org/dusseldorf2015.