

Editorial

The Global Crisis of Medical Meetings

Marinković S*

Professor of Anatomy and Neuroanatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia

***Corresponding author:** Slobodan Marinković, Professor of Anatomy and Neuroanatomy, Faculty of Medicine, University of Belgrade, Serbia**Received:** July 10, 2018; **Accepted:** July 25, 2018;**Published:** August 01, 2018**Editorial**

Clinical and scientific meetings, which mainly comprise conferences, symposia, and congresses, are very important for an exchange of knowledge, ideas, and experiences. However, in the last few years we have been witnessing a dramatic decline of meetings, that is, a much smaller number of participants, and a modest quality of their oral presentations. There are two main reasons for such a situation: the method of organizing meetings, and the attitudes of us working at clinics or research laboratories.

It all started when organizing committees in various medical fields decided to engage some specialized international agencies for organizing meetings. These agencies, which declare themselves as “nonprofit organizations,” actually introduced standard business logic: to reduce their expenses to a maximum and thus to make the highest possible profit. Among others, they organize meetings exclusively at airport hotels, since transportation and accommodation of the participants, as well as hiring meeting halls, are much cheaper than in city hotels. This, however, has produced certain consequences.

For example, the meeting halls at those hotels are usually very small, non-attractive, and not completely equipped for medical presentations. Further, most of the participants, especially those accompanied by their partners or children who would like in the meantime to visit important city sites, museums, and galleries, must pay a lot of money for taxi or coach drives each day to get to these places. This fact, along with some others, has significantly reduced the number of participants. In order to overcome this situation, a review of the proposed subjects is virtually non-existent, so that each suggested presentation of participants is accepted for meetings without any criteria. For the same reason, the agencies started to

merge two different and unrelated meetings held at the same time, for example, those of endocrinology and abdominal surgery. Further, when participants with a low income ask the engaged agency for some support, they are usually informed that it belongs to a “nonprofit organization,” so that it can give them a modest discount. Thus, it turns out that only well-off colleagues can attend clinical or scientific meetings.

On the other hand, we ourselves are also responsible for such a situation. Many of us believe that in today’s high technology era all the necessary professional data can be provided from PubMed and similar medical web sites just in a few minutes, for instance, from our smartphones. However, although this is true, most of the original ideas cannot be found in any database. Accordingly, meetings are crucial for ideas exchange and for new ideas to emerge through direct professional discussions and polemics. Similarly, personal professional experiences can also be exchanged and shared at meetings. Moreover, all this could rapidly improve some aspects of clinical practice and scientific research. It would also initiate an international exchange of clinicians and researchers after the meetings, or be useful for common scientific projects.

One of the solutions is to organize the meetings in city hotels, or to provide cheap transportation from distant hotels, as well as to organize short, attractive, and low-cost city excursions, or a visit to a local medical institution or research institute. Second, medical associations should create some funds to support low-income colleagues and younger researchers. Third, and most relevant, is to invite and wholly support one or two eminent world experts to participate at the actual meeting. This would attract and motivate many colleagues worldwide to attend those meetings and to present their best results in clinical or basic research, but after passing a serious review processing.

The situation with medical meetings is so bad that we are faced with their further decline and eventual disappearance. Finally, we all must understand that, in addition to business and profit, there are some other very important issues: humanity, solidarity, communication, and collaboration.