How to do it

Organise an international medical meeting

V: The final programme

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The first important decision regarding the final programme is to be quite sure which committee members are responsible for writing the different sections. Copy must be in press by the two-month mark at the very latest. Ideally, the final programme should be pocket size—15 cm × 25 cm—and should contain information about the outline programme, in both French and English and including both social events and scientific programme; and general information, also in French and English, consisting of:

- (1) *Registration and information centre*—Location and times of opening and telephone numbers;
- (2) *Congress secretariat*—As above;
- (3) *Congress badges*—Explanation of various colours where necessary; note on procedure should they be lost (that is, report to secretariat immediately); and, most important, the request that badges should be worn at all times (see note on security).
- (4) *Press office*—Location, telephone, and opening times. The press office should handle all requests for interviews, press conferences, and photographs.
- (5) *Trade exhibition*—Location, opening times, plus time of official opening ceremony, and telephone number of trade information desk. A large section of the final programme will, of course, be devoted to the trade exhibition which will give a complete list of all firms attending, their stand numbers, and a profile of their products.
- (6) *Travel bureau*—Location, opening times, and telephone.
- (7) *Airline office*—As above.
- (8) *Banking services*—As above.
- (9) *Post office*—A postal and telecommunications service should be provided for delegates from a temporary post office located in X area. The post office will be open from 0900 to 1600 hours, and its telephone number should be given. Outgoing calls may be made from public telephone boxes located at 1, 2, 3, 4 points. The cost of a local call is Xp.
- (10) *Refreshments*—State location, opening times, and approximate price. *NB.* Continental people do not have the same drinking habits as ourselves and providing special lunch bars and beer tents is not a viable proposition. Nevertheless, a bar accommodating about 200 people, open all day and situated in

the trade exhibition, should be adequate. Remember that to have your own bar in, for example, university premises does not absolve the committee from responsibility for finding out if special licensing permission must be obtained.

(11) *Medical services*—In cases of emergency the usual facilities would be available, but with a conference held within a university it is a good idea to co-operate with the university medical service, which has regular consulting hours and a resident dental staff. These facilities can be announced in the final programme—but do remember to obtain official blessing from the director of the university medical centre.

(12) *Taxis*—List main taxi firms in the area, giving telephone numbers.

(13) *Self-drive car hire and chauffeur-driven cars*—As above.

(14) *Public bus services*—Details of main city services to and from conference centre.

(15) *Ladies' social programme*—Location plus full details of programme.

(16) *Maps*—Pull-out maps of city centre and conference area. Don't forget to clear copyright where necessary.

(17) *Scientific programme*—Give full details.

(18) *Advertisers*—Advertising is an important source of revenue and should greatly defray the costs of producing the final programme. A committee member should be delegated to sell advertising space, or you may choose to employ the services of an advertising agent. We recommend you do the job yourself. An agent charges commission, often payable also to other subcontracted agents, and he is quite likely to omit many local advertisers, whom a committee member could easily contact himself.

Other considerations

TEMPORARY STAFF

In a large meeting you may need up to 40 temporary staff divided equally between medical students, who should be responsible for slide collection, and arts students, who can act as stewards and interpreters in the registration area. The arts students may be helped by members of the local Women's Royal Volunteer Service, especially for coping with inquiries regarding the city and local districts at the information desk at the time of registration.

The languages that we think it is essential to cover are French, German, Italian, Spanish, and Russian. French is the second language of many delegates from the Middle East and from Eastern Europe, and Spanish speakers are appreciative if, after a journey from South America, they are not obliged to speak English.

It is well worth while to have a safety margin in your staff

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numbers, as well as having enough people to cover for lunch and coffee breaks. It is essential to have people "on hand" to accompany delegates in special circumstances: for example, to retrieve lost luggage at the railway station or airport, or to accompany someone to the hospital casualty department. To be able to provide a certain amount of handholding makes the important difference between a delegate feeling that he has arrived, and feeling that he has arrived and can now relax.

OFFICIAL RECEPTIONS

You will certainly have to arrange at least one official reception: these are some of the considerations in staging an opening ceremony:

(1) *Hall*—Booked from city two years in advance. Ushers and floral decorations may well have to be arranged through separate suppliers.

(2) *Public address system*—A special contractor may have to be engaged, but obviously you cannot discuss these requirements until you have made final plans for placing your platform party.

(3) *Platform party*—Who receives them on arrival at hall? Check the order of precedence for city dignitaries in the line-up. Order of speeches? Drinks before, after, or both?

(4) *Refreshments*—If refreshments are being provided for participants, check on the licensing laws and local rules: for example, no alcohol may be sold in certain halls booked for an opening.

(5) *Orchestra*—Some entertainment before the ceremony is much appreciated. A concert goes down well, but you will have to book the orchestra a year in advance. Do not forget that if your concert is broadcast live or taped for broadcast you may receive a considerable reduction in the usual fee charged by the orchestra.

(6) *Official invitations*—Be quite clear among committee members about who will receive official invitations to attend receptions, and whose task it is to issue these invitations. Also, do not overlook the ease with which it is possible to forget that tickets must be printed for such events, including special tickets for the platform party.

(7) *Programmes*—Don't forget that, once printed, you still have to arrange to have these distributed.

(8) *Flowers*—While on the subject of floral decoration—for the stage at the opening ceremony at least—don't forget that a display of flowers in the registration area or trade exhibition enhances its appearance. All major cities have a parks and gardens department and it is often possible to rent flowers from such bodies.

(9) *Umbrellas*—In the UK, at least, it is wise to have a few large umbrellas available at the entrance to your receptions and people there to carry them.

(10) *Transport*—If special transportation is provided for your delegates, do remember that, in the UK, it is illegal to take payment for a fare or to issue tickets on a hired bus.

(11) *Taxis*—Tell local taxi services about the time and location of your special functions: a queue of taxis by a concert hall exit comes to no harm.

PUBLIC RELATIONS/PRESS OFFICER

The public relations and press management of any conference are specialist jobs. The university press officer may make you this kind of offer, and, failing this, make quite sure that one person, and one only, is delegated as press officer. The following are intended as guidelines on how to approach the subject, but your first stage should be to form a small public relations committee consisting of, say, four or five members, including representatives from the local press.

(1) *Advance publicity*—At four months from the start of your conference, invitations should be sent by your public relations

officer to the national press, TV, BBC radio, and local radio stations, as well as editors of the professional and trade Press, inviting them to attend or, if they wish, make arrangements to cover the conference. The invitation letter should be accompanied by a press release giving the date, location, countries attending, and an outline programme. This information should also go to the Commonwealth Press Union; Press Association; Reuter; Foreign Press Association; and US correspondents in London.

At this stage the press office should compile profiles of newsworthy delegates attending the conference and any items of particular interest in the scientific programme or trade exhibition.

(2) *Advance press conference*—Late during the week before the conference, the main office-bearers should take a press conference attended by visiting journalists, national and local press, BBC TV, BBC and local radio—all invited to attend by the public relations officer. This press conference should cover the whole ground of the following week's proceedings.

(3) *Publicity during the conference*—The press are invited to attend the opening and closing ceremonies, all appropriate scientific sessions, and all social events and receptions. Evening press conferences may be arranged at the end of each working day in the press office, where the chairmen of the various sessions can give an account of the day's proceedings.

(4) *Press office*—A temporary press office should be set up in the conference centre, consisting of the working press office itself and a room suitable for press interviews and sound radio interviews. The office should have available all morning national papers; all current press releases; advance copies of speeches; copies of congress programmes; general literature on the societies taking part; and refreshments.

The press office should be set up two days before the delegates arrive and should operate until the final press conference has been held.

(5) *Press cards*—These must be available for distribution to press members.

INSURANCE

The following insurance cover must be taken out by the local organising committee:

(1) *Public and employers' liability*—To cover injury or damage to or caused by committee employees. Inexpensive but essential—indeed, a legal obligation. Cover for £1m can be arranged for a modest premium.

(2) *Abandonment cover*—This figure must equal the irrecoverable expenditure that would be incurred by the committee were the conference to be cancelled at the last minute—due to strikes, fires, epidemics, and so on. It must also include such unpaid commitments as perishable stocks laid in by caterers for events that have to be cancelled.

(3) *Briefcases*—These will certainly have to be stored on conference or committee premises, for a few days at least. Make sure you insure against their loss by fire or theft.

(4) *Office contents*—No matter how modest your office, or how many of its contents are borrowed or lent, take out an All Risks policy to cover its contents.

Finally, check that the number of people you intend to accommodate in the various halls and lecture theatres does not contravene local fire regulations. Fire regulations are surprisingly strict and neglecting them could be disastrous.

SECURITY

Unfortunately, it is a fact of life that large gatherings of people (especially in a confined space) attract the criminal element of any community, especially petty thieves. It is therefore essential that a security service be provided. The university security officer can often provide a first-class 24-hour service to

cover all conference premises. It is extremely important that delegates should always wear their conference badge. Anyone not wearing a badge should be asked by a security officer to identify himself.

CLEANING

Special cleaning services will have to be arranged for conference premises, including the trade exhibition. Little things like unemptied ashtrays create bad impression. The best and obvious source of the service is the body from whom you rent the premises.

TEMPORARY TELEPHONES

The GPO requires three months' notice to install temporary telephones. Be particularly careful about telephones. Visit everyone concerned in providing the service and be on hand to go round the actual location with the installation engineers. Temporary telephone numbers appear in your final programme and they must be correct. It is unbelievably easy to get them

wrong. Check each on site. Temporary telephones are necessary but expensive.

XEROX

Your secretariat will require a Xerox photocopier from the word go, and the press office will almost certainly need one during the conference. These can be obtained on a short-term rental and you may be able to obtain more favourable terms by renting through your university or hospital.

SPARE TYPEWRITER

A remarkable number of delegates will ask for typing facilities, so have a spare typewriter for their use.

ATTENDANCE CERTIFICATES

A popular request, so have them prepared in advance with nothing to complete but the delegate's name.

MATERIA NON MEDICA

Conducting

Lovers of classical music occasionally dream of conducting a full-size symphony orchestra in the concert hall instead of waving an arm from the security of the fireside chair in time with the latest hi-fi recording. Such a dream recently and unexpectedly came true.

With the consent of the Musicians' Union, I was invited to conduct the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Rossini's overture "William Tell" at the civic concert at the Winter Gardens. In a euphoric moment I accepted the challenge, only later realising that I could hardly read a note of music, had never conducted an orchestra, and that "William Tell" has three separate sections before the well-known march theme at the end. Despite listening to tapes and records, reading books on conducting, and obtaining sound advice from real conductors, the rehearsal was a near disaster, with the orchestra playing merrily away and my baton cleaving the air like the frenzied razor of the barber of Seville.

There is probably no lonelier place in the world than the artist's dressing room before a concert and no longer walk than that from wings to rostrum, except perhaps from wicket to pavilion at Trent Bridge. So, remembering the advice of that eminent conductor Sir Charles Groves to "conduct it as fast as you can, but not twice as fast as you can," the live performance took place in front of an audience nearly 2000 strong. It was a nerve-racking ordeal. The orchestra and my baton movements began together. Surviving an overwhelming feeling of impending disaster every few bars, somehow we also finished together. Before the applause died down I just managed to get from the platform to the obscurity of the dressing room, from whence I felt I should never have emerged. Fortunately, the orchestra were superb, the critics extraordinarily kind, and it is now possible to recollect the event in tranquillity.—GABRIEL JAFFÉ (physician, Bournemouth).

Footprints in the snow

I have never seen a Yeti. I have never even seen the footprints of a Yeti. But I have seen the footprints of a bear in the snow, and in the circumstances I was not too disappointed that it was only the Yeti's smaller cousin that had crossed my path, for I had no means of knowing whether it intended recrossing it—to my probable discomfort. It was spring, and my friend and I were out on a steep walk from a small mission hospital in the Himalayas. The snow line was about two thousand feet above the hospital, and soon after we reached it we saw this line of bear tracks crossing from the left. It was about the time when bears awake from their winter sleep and look for some-

thing to eat, which was why we were nervous. Also we could not fail to notice that whereas we sank up to our knees in the soft snow, the bear had plodded happily on the surface, sinking in barely to his ankles. As he would weigh at least three times as much as us, this seemed a little unfair. In the event we continued our climb and never saw the bear; but we glanced over our shoulders rather more often than usual.

Bears were fairly common in the mountains, both brown bears, which were not too fierce, and black bears, which were far too fierce. I was told by a hunter friend that self-respecting bears do not attack humans unless they have to—unless they are cornered, that is. I believed this until I had a boy brought to the hospital who had been following his sheep down the mountain when he saw a bear attacking them. He took off as fast as he could in the opposite direction, and scrambled up a tree, but the bear pursued him and clawed him down. Only the timely arrival of three shepherds who drove the creature off saved him from serious injury. So I am not so sure.

Anyway, whenever I was out climbing I made a practice of giving a loud and very human shout every few hundred yards; and it may have worked, because the few bears I saw were always, if not actually running, at least ambling out of my way. The local hill men must have thought my bear shouts just another example of the extraordinary behaviour of Englishmen. But then, it was they who came to me to have their bear injuries stitched up, and not vice versa.—T PETER SNELL (general practitioner, Chester-le-Street).

WORDS The humours were fluids, and fluids, by definition, flow. Oddly enough, these terms have different derivations despite their similarity: fluid—*L fluere*, to flow; flow—via Teutonic from *G ploein*, to float; *L plorare*, to weep. The Greek for flow is *rhein*, whence **RHEOLOGY**, a branch of applied physics concerned with the study of fluid flow. Rheology has its applications in industry—for example, in the manufacture of jam and paint—not too runny and not too thick. Give me thixotropic honey any day. In the biological sciences the rheology of cervical mucus is important in relation to fertility, and bronchial mucus to expectoration. Its non-Newtonian fluid properties are essential for mucociliary clearance. In medical terminology there are many **RHOEAS**, mostly unappetising. Rhino, leuco, gono, dia, pyo, oto, ameno and dysmeno-rhoea, to name but a few, and all involving flow. An odd one is **CATARRH**, derived from a hypothetical catarrhoea, meaning down flow—that is, postnatal drip and its associations. The oea seems to have dripped off too.