

CASE STUDY No. 19

Continuing the series of case studies from leading PCOs around the world

Beyond Congress Management

Associations are more than their congress, and IAPCO PCOs are more than congress organisers. Delivering innumerable quality congresses has given IAPCO members invaluable insights into the business needs of their clients and has allowed them to become trusted advisors who can contribute to the success of an organisation beyond their congress. IAPCO's philosophy is entirely based on quality, and its members actively share best-practice and develop educational programmes and guidelines which enable them to perform at the highest levels in any area of expertise related to organisational excellence. To illustrate this, IAPCO regularly publishes success stories of members who have helped their clients to be successful not just by organising their congress, but by achieving overarching business objectives.

European Congress of Trauma and Emergency Surgery 24-26 April 2016, Vienna, Austria

PCO: Mondial Congress & Events, Vienna



The challenge

To include the 'voice of the patient' in a medical congress programme

It is no exaggeration to say that trauma and emergency surgeons all over the world are saving lives on a daily basis. Any surgeon can speak of a job well done when a patient leaves his or her care in good health and is never seen again. After all, this usually means that the patient has fully recovered from trauma and injury. The fact that trauma and emergency surgeons are mainly needed in extreme situations understandably leads to a certain thematic bias in the programmes of their congresses. How can we stop the bleeding faster? How can bones mend cleaner? When can surgery be replaced by medication? These sober topics are all highly relevant and will continue to save more lives in the future. However, sometimes, seeing the other side can be of great benefit to the surgeon too. This was the train of thought of the European Society for Trauma and Emergency Surgery (ESTES), who expressed the wish to have the voice of the patient represented at their 2016 congress in Vienna.

While the patient's well-being has ever been the top priority of the profession, the patient's perspective was to be added as food for thought, as an incentive to reflect on one's skills in relation to one's patient. The challenge therefore was to give the patient a voice while still maintaining the technical and medical focus of the meeting as a whole.



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The solution

When we speak of inspirational moments at conferences, chances are that these will be experienced during keynote lectures. Keynote lectures often kick-start a congress with an opportunity to think outside the box and open the mind to what is to come in the programme that follows. The ESTES therefore decided that the patient's voice was to be represented in a keynote lecture.

As a high-profile speaker, entrepreneur, author, competitive skier and former model Heather Mills could be won. Heather lost her left leg below the knee in a motorcycle accident. She also crushed her pelvis, punctured her lung and split her head open. Ever since, she has been acting as an advocate for trauma survivors;

even initiating the development of prosthetic limbs for athletes and inspiring millions with her charity work for people with disabilities. In her lecture "Overcoming Adversity and Living with a Disability" Heather Mills connected her own experience as a patient with her insight into prosthetics, expressing her gratitude to the surgeons who saved her life.

In addition, Heather insisted that her honorarium be donated to the Diakoniewerk Schladming, an Austrian institution dedicated to caring for people with disabilities and the elderly. Donation boxes were placed on site and all congress participants invited to make a contribution.



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The outcome

Heather Mills' well-received keynote lecture left participants with a fresh perspective, which they could take with them to the more heavily scientific portion of the congress. Donation boxes placed at the venue served to remind delegates of the patient's perspective and encouraged them to make a small financial contribution to their rehabilitation, which inevitably follows after the immediate experience of acute physical trauma has passed.

Diakoniewerk Schladming, the organisation that benefited from the donations, is a popular Austrian ski resort where Heather Mills – a successful para-athlete – trains frequently. Skiing is extremely popular but claims numerous victims each year with most of the fatalities due to traumatic injuries. By choosing a charitable association based in a winter sports region, it is to be hoped that proceeds will directly benefit the victims of skiing accidents. Heather Mills herself is a powerful voice in the skiing community and can act as a role model for many skiers worldwide. Thus, surgeons not only contribute to the treatment, but also make an active contribution to the long-term improvement of health and safety in sports – and what sport could represent the meeting's host country better than skiing?