

EDITORIAL

Fewer applauders in medical congresses; what has happened?

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Medical congresses offer impressive research presentations, educational lectures by important scientists, challenging round tables and debates, valuable workshops, and happy life when they are held in magic places all over the world. The problem is that they are getting more and more expensive and that many times the level of the offered education is not exactly what we are expecting. For example, if you go to a congress and are aware of the fact that the famous professor has probably been giving the very same lecture for the 100th time, you feel that you are not getting the update you were hoping to receive.

Or, if research presentations are dealing with the unimportant or already solved research questions or finish like “however, many other studies will be needed to come to conclusions”, we feel that we had better go to the sea in front of our hotel, instead of losing our time in the congress hall.

Also, when an evaluation of our CV is made for an appointment, the various committees many times, consider the participation to congresses not so important, especially when we are not the ones they want to choose.

Also, when our earnings are too few to support the participation in congresses, the question for the real need to go to congresses becomes stronger and stronger.

The worst experience I have ever had was in a congress conducted in Athens, and organized by Professors in Surgery. The congress participation fee was free, but at the end of it there was a workshop, for surgeons, with a fee of 500 Euros per participant. The workshop lasted almost 30 minutes. The participants were 20 in total, and the animals used for education was... one! The time available for each surgeon was about 1 minute and a few seconds. In this way, we paid 500 Euros for one minute of education. This was too expensive for us, because our monthly income was 1200 Euros. We did not really respect the organizers after this congress. And we were feeling like idiots who pay the professor in order to buy a piece of paper, as evidence of participation.

In another 15- day- Laparoscopic Surgery workshop, held in a magic Greek island, and paid by the Ministry of Health, when I applied, I was told that I was the first who applied. When the results were announced, for the persons who were chosen according to the date of applying, I saw that I was not included in the participants list. I called the organizers many times and finally managed to participate, because I knew that I was the first applicant. When I arrived in the island I saw that the only surgeon in the Laparoscopic Surgery workshop was me and 2 others, and the rest participants were psychiatrists, microbiologists, general doctors, doctors without specialty- very young ones, etc. It was very hard for me to understand. Later, I understood why those persons were chosen. The hotels were paid by the Ministry of Health, and the participants were close persons of the organizers. The instructors never came out of the sea, and the workshop was something like a ghost- workshop.

In a third 2- day workshop, although I was a participant I was asked to teach the rest of my colleagues, because I was already a specialized surgeon then. When the workshop finally ended, and after having completed 20/20 right answers in the test, I learnt that I was the only one who failed in the total evaluation. This was quite strange, and in the end I understood that this happened because the organizers did not like persons who were correcting their mistakes during the workshop!

In a fourth congress, at the registration desk, I met a surgeon, who was member of a committee for appointments in the National System of Health and who had given a negative mark for my appointment in a rural Hospital of North Greece. The surgeon received his registration bag and card at the arrival day, and never again appeared in the congress. In this way, I understood why he gave the mark “zero” to the education I had received in 250 congresses. Because he thought that all doctors are just “buying attendance certificates” in congresses exactly as he does.