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The European Symposium of Emergency Medicine, Munich, September 15-18, 2008

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CONFERENCE REVIEW

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The European Symposium of Emergency Medicine Munich, September 15-18, 2008

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One of the significant aspects of planning during candidature for any postgraduate study must be a publication strategy. Having recently completed the Master of Emergency Health degree at Monash University Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice (DCEHPP), and having included a research component to the degree, I was encouraged to participate in a conference presentation to facilitate experiential learning. This paper is a synopsis of that experience, and provides an overview of the potential opportunities available for paramedics engaging in further study.

The European Symposium of Emergency Medicine (EuSEM) 2008 congress represents one of the most prestigious gatherings of emergency health care professionals in the European Union, and also enables global representation from guest speakers and presenters.

The EuSEM is a federation of 22 representative countries and national societies within each country. The federation has a membership of over 13000 emergency physicians and is a non-profit organisation which began as a multidisciplinary group of experts in 1994.

EuSEM's aims are to promote the advancement of clinical practice and science (research) in the emergency medicine community, with a focus on prehospital, in-hospital, inter-hospital emergency medical care and disaster planning. This is achieved through support of education, through a pan-European specialization of emergency medicine to develop common standards of practice and research.

As a MICA Paramedic employed by Ambulance Victoria, it was a bold move to submit an abstract for consideration by the scientific committee of EuSEM, and somewhat of a surprise to receive notification of acceptance to present at the conference in Munich. As one of the 110 accepted to present out of approximately 500 abstracts submitted, and as the only paramedic representative of Australia at the conference, the experience was daunting in its significance. The contributions of Monash University and Ambulance Victoria provided me with much appreciated financial assistance to travel half way across the world to speak for 12 minutes, thanks to Professor Frank Archer (Monash University, DCEHPP) and Group Manager Kevin Masci of Ambulance Victoria. I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support and guidance provided to me by my research supervisor (Dr Ameer Morgans, Monash University at DCEHPP), and Group Manager Michael Stephenson, (Ambulance Victoria), both of whom I am indebted to during the process of completing my year-long clinical research study preceding my presentation at the conference.

The conference venue, the Gasteig, is the home of the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra - a magnificent modern building of three floors which, along with the Philharmonic auditorium, consists of an additional five auditoriums, surrounding a large exhibition area ideally located for sponsor displays and poster presentations.

The theme of the EuSEM (2008) Congress "*Time Critical Care Saves Lives*" highlighted a variety of eminent keynote speakers, including Dr Judith Fox-Tintinalli (Physician and Author) who spoke of the importance for research in Emergency Medicine, and Dr Gautam Bodiwala (President of the International Federation for Emergency Medicine) who gave the Hermann Delooz lecture. The congress was also the meeting place for the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the German Society of Interdisciplinary Emergency Departments (DGINA). The congress was attended by approximately one thousand health care professionals over the four days – which was evident by the numbers in attendance at various education sessions and meetings, presentations and the congress dinner.

Topics of interest to Australian paramedics included Paediatric Emergencies and Trauma Updates; Sepsis; challenges to Prehospital care in Europe; Disaster Management; Anaphylaxis, and Resuscitation. While there was much to engage in, the program made it impossible to view all five concurrent sessions of interest. However, I was able to attend several lectures and presentations on subjects that were of great interest to me, such as hypothermia, sepsis and disaster medicine.

With the high quality of presentations, volume of information presented, and the opportunity to network with other health professionals I felt that the conference was truly worthwhile. I was also very impressed with the quality and content of presentations by paramedics from the European fraternity, which left me with the impression that Australian paramedics are truly able to place themselves with the best in the world, despite the absence of a physician qualification. This was reiterated in my networking with emergency physicians from around the world, many of whom echoed my feelings by expressing surprise at the level and capability of MICA paramedics in a relatively autonomous emergency health environment.

Sponsors at the congress demonstrated the latest technologies in diagnostic and monitoring equipment, as well as newer developments in cardiac monitoring, non-invasive ventilation, laryngoscopy, intubation, intra-osseous cannulation, and cooling devices for cardiac arrest patients' post-ROSC. I had the opportunity to talk with many representatives of various companies and organisations, and have since been contacted by their Australian representatives to discuss their products. I was also able to test and experience the latest innovations in such technologies as Bluetooth® cardiac monitors (with all the bells and whistles), in-field blood gas analysis, intra-osseous cannulation devices, in-field non-invasive ventilation equipment, post-ROSC cooling systems and medical protocol/pharmacological treatment and database systems (which download to PDA or mobile phone on demand).

On the second day of the conference I had the opportunity to present in the Kleiner Konzertsaal auditorium at 0830. Having uploaded my presentation and checked its functionality with the techs on the previous day, I imbibed several strong and slightly bitter German coffees prior to being ushered into the theatre with the other five presenters for the ninety-minute session. I listened to Ales Jelovsek discuss the use of computerised patient care records in Slovenia (a much simpler form, yet with parallels to the VACIS system in function and purpose), and to Jana Seblova, who discussed critical incident stress in the Czech Republic (of interest was the statistic that an excess of 40% of Czech ambulance drivers have had a significant road accident in the ambulance vehicle). Shortly after, and with typical German precision, it was my turn to take the lectern and begin my discourse on the

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prehospital utilisation of the Valsalva Maneuvre by MICA paramedics. After concluding, I was subjected to a five minute polite but thorough grilling by members of the audience (which numbered about fifty people) on various aspects of my topic. I left the stage to applause and an appreciative nod from the chair; feeling satisfied that the twelve month clinical study, the preparation and travel had all paid off in this moment of time. I also had a very real sense of where my educational journey had taken me to this point.

The coffee break after the session enabled me to gain some valuable feedback from those who had been watching, and to talk to the other presenters about their projects. This informal atmosphere (with copious quantities of the obligatory coffee, biscuits and cakes) was a refreshing way to meet other health professionals from around the world (notably New York, Czech republic, Spain, Slovenia, Germany and the UK), whilst also being able to discuss the capabilities of MICA paramedics in Melbourne. The rest of the conference consisted of attending various lecture sessions, discussions with sponsors, perusing the latest medical and research, and the consumption of copious amounts of coffee, cakes and biscuits. It is possible that I may have gained some weight in the pursuit of knowledge, but I believe that such sacrifices needed to be accommodated.

Although my time in Munich was brief, the experience has enabled me to grow, both personally and professionally. I would also like to believe that I have been able to benefit others within the paramedic fraternity by demonstrating that we are capable of delivering presentations of a high calibre to a discerning audience.

It has been both an honour and a pleasure to assist in enhancing the reputation of Victorian MICA Paramedics on an international stage, and also a base from which I hope to build upon in the future. I would also hope that my experience inspires some of my peers to seek out opportunities (whenever they can) to define our craft through research, publication and presentation.

For further information on the EuSEM Federation, please visit: <http://www.eusem.org/>