

Medical metropolises

Year on year medical and pharma meetings are getting bigger. Robin Anderson takes us on a whirlwind tour of the world's leading knowledge hubs

Vienna

Two of Europe's leading medical and pharmaceutical meetings destinations are devising their own brand of double-hubbing thanks to joint hosting of the European Association of Nuclear Medicine's annual congress.

At this year's gathering, held in the Austria Center Vienna in October, the Association's Board decided the world's leading event in nuclear medicine will take place again in Barcelona in 2019, 2022 and 2025 and will return to the Austrian capital in 2020, 2023 and 2026.

More than 6,300 participants attend the congress, which features 2,000 scientific abstracts and almost 160 sessions. New features include a Review Centre, where participants can view presentations they missed and then ask questions of the presenters.

The Association's president Kristoff Muylle said: "We started our long-term co-operation with Barcelona and Vienna in 2016 and 2017 and the overall positive impact for us as an association and for our participants made it easy for the Board to confirm the co-operation until 2026 with both cities."

So what makes Vienna so uniquely attractive for these types of meetings?

Vienna Convention Bureau director Christian Mutschlechner said: "Vienna Medical University and Vienna Medical School are key players in the development of global healthcare. We never underestimate the value of these organisations as knowledge hubs and training providers alongside their congress magnetism.

"Large congresses tend to take place at the Austria Center Vienna and Messe Wien while our leading hotels offer preferred locations for training meetings alongside our medical associations' own headquarters," he added. "Accompanying exhibitions tend to focus on research companies specialising in the sectors



Fira Gran Via Barcelona

“Barcelona’s pharmaceutical sector includes affiliates from Sanofi, Novartis, Bayer and Boehringer Ingelheim”

covered by the association involved.”

The city's leading event continues to be the European Congress of Radiology, which takes place every March at the Austria Center Vienna, and is renowned globally for its creativity and innovation. It attracts around 20,000 participants.

Barcelona

Meanwhile, Barcelona's strong medical and scientific community features its own rich repertoire of congress ambassadors, supported by an alluringly professional array of venues and hotels, all helping to explain the city's flair in attracting repeat events, according to Christoph Tessmar, director of Barcelona Convention Bureau.

The city's pharmaceutical sector includes affiliates from Sanofi, Novartis, Bayer and Boehringer Ingelheim who host meetings in their own right as well as complementing medical meetings'

activities in the convention centres CCIB and Fira Barcelona as well as the smaller Palau de Congressos de Catalunya.

Social programmes are much more limited than they would have been in the past thanks to strict meeting codes – usually just a presidential dinner, perhaps in one of Barcelona's more unusual venues such as a museum. And five-star hotels are no longer used. Sponsorship budgets are much more limited, exhibition space is reduced, there are fewer invitations for associated physicians and accompanying persons programmes are no longer organised, he added.

The CCIB is set to welcome 5,000 delegates for the European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology in April, while the Fira Gran Via will host 8,000 participants for the European Congress on Orthopaedics in June, 4,000 for the European Society of Hypertension in June, followed by the World Ophthalmology Congress with 15,000 delegates.

The 2019 schedule includes the European Association for the Study of Diabetes Annual Meeting with 15,000 delegates expected and the European Society for Medical Oncology with 20,000 participants, both at the Fira Gran Via.

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London

London's flair for hosting medical mega-events has just been confirmed with news that the European Society of Cardiology, the world's largest gathering of heart specialists, will be returning to London in 2021, despite the UK's vote to leave the European Union.

"It represents a huge vote of confidence in London's position as a world-class city for meetings, events and medical research," said Tracy Halliwell, director of Business Tourism and Major Events at London & Partners, the Mayor's official promotional agency and convention bureau for the city.

When it was last in London in 2015, the ESC attracted more than 32,700 delegates from 140 countries worldwide and generated £100 million in economic benefit for the city.

The decision to come to London again coincides with Mayor Sadiq Khan's adoption of the Healthy Streets Approach, prioritising health in transport and planning decisions and investing £2.1 billion in schemes that promote walking, cycling and public transport over car use.

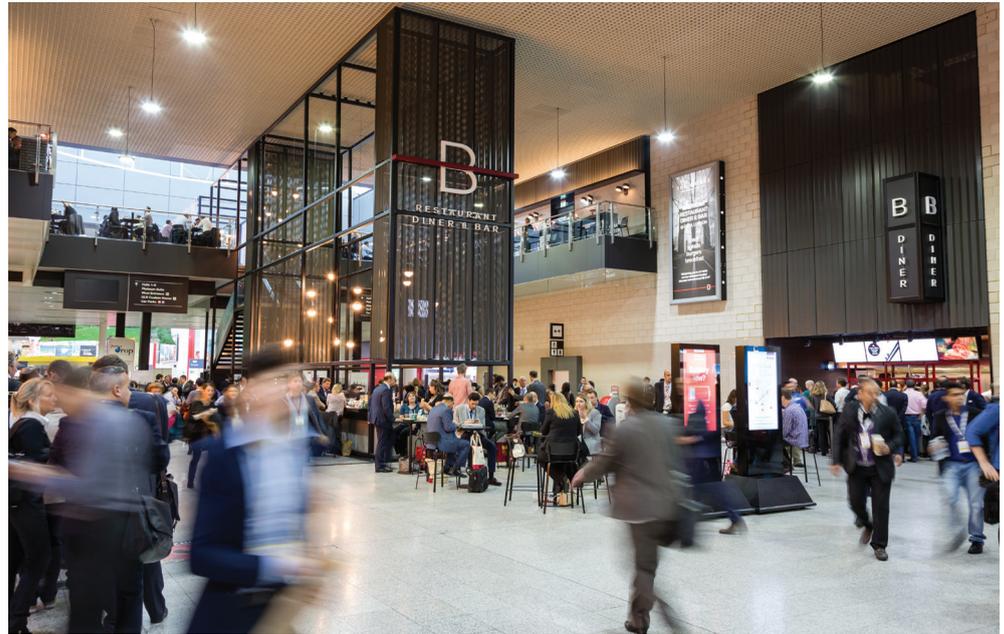
The ESC's chief executive officer, Isabel Bardin, said: "For one week in August 2021 London will be the hub of the battle against heart disease, the number one killer in today's world."

James Rees, executive director of ExCeL London, said: "The way ESC used ExCeL in 2015 was truly spectacular, resulting in a record-breaking event all round. And when the congress returns, ExCeL will have an on-site Elizabeth Line station so delegates will be able to travel direct from Heathrow in 43 minutes and the West End in just 15."

Halliwell added: "With 100,000 sqm of event space, ExCeL London can easily accommodate tens of thousands of delegates while other large options include the CLICC, Central London International Conference Centre, created from a partnership between the QEII and Central Hall Westminster. This is where the recent 22nd World Congress of the International Federation for the Surgery of Obesity and Metabolic Disorders took place.

"London's dedicated medical venues include the Royal College of Physicians, BMA House, the Wellcome Collection and the Royal Society of Medicine. London and the Greater South East, now termed the Golden Triangle, is home to four of the world's ten leading universities with more than 185,000 students specialising in life sciences, alongside 3,400 life science companies and 19 of the top 20 global pharmaceutical companies.

"The launch of MedCity in 2014 has really galvanised the industry in the Golden Triangle, showcasing London's



ExCeL London

strength in securing life science events, both corporate and associations. We also work closely with a number of medical event agencies such as Ashfield Meetings & Events, a global specialist in the pharma meetings sector.

"Yes, certain rules apply to the conduct of all healthcare events. In particular, there are limitations on anything that can be deemed to incentivise delegate attendance. In the case of corporate events, the business content will determine to what extent they need to comply with meeting codes. London has several dedicated events teams that can help planners navigate the city and point to our wealth of pharma-code compliant venues and accommodation."

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ICC Birmingham

Birmingham

Birmingham's ICC offers another of the UK's leading combinations of conference and exhibition space to balance the needs of medical and pharma associations.

According to Jenna Hadley, the NEC Group's PR and Communications manager, the ICC features ten executive rooms and ten halls ideal for symposia while the largest hall, with more than 3,000 sqm of space is well suited to exhibition action. The venue's versatility also allows for live theatre in the exhibition areas for pharma specialists to use for special interest sessions.

"And with the biggest dining capacity in the city, the ICC can host gala dinners for 600-1,000 delegates. We also work closely with all of our partners in the West Midlands Growth Company to ensure that associations meeting at the ICC fully understand everything Birmingham has to offer them.

"With strict meetings guidelines in place, we have to adopt a highly creative approach to getting delegates in front of exhibitors outside the normal exhibitor areas. This can include using symposia events, additional branding and the use of enhanced technologies such as our media wall and media screens."

Upcoming events include the British Orthopaedic Association with 1,700 delegates over five days, plus exhibitors from across the UK, in September; the British Oncology Pharmacy Association with 800 delegates for three days in October; and the Institute of Biomedical Science with 2,000 delegates and 250 exhibitors for a four-day conference.

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Belfast

Belfast's burgeoning reputation for hosting large-scale events and conventions has been complemented by a billion pounds of investment in the city's tourism infrastructure over the past ten years. And by the end of 2018, another 1,000 hotel rooms will have come on-stream.

Around 13,000 people study life and health sciences and related subjects at university and Northern Ireland is home to the UK's first BSc and MSc courses in stratified medicine. Ulster and Queen's Universities rank among the top ten in the UK for bioscience research. The area's research and development infrastructure provides specialists and investors with a skilled workforce and the international access needed to deliver the full benefits that precision medicine can deliver.

The Northern Ireland Biobank collects, stores and distributes samples to support innovative R&D, focusing on malignancies from the gastrointestinal tracts, thoracic cavity, breast, lymphoreticular system, head and neck, genitourinary and gynaecological tracts. And NI Geomic Medicine Centre is a partnership with NHS England, Geonomics England and the UK Medical Research Council bringing together the health sector, academia, industry and patients, placing Northern Ireland at the forefront of medical innovation.

Thanks to the Belfast Ambassador Programme, Visit Belfast works closely with a broad spectrum of research centres to attract meetings business, including the Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology, the Centre for Stratified Medicine, Centre for Experimental Medicine, the Intelligent Systems Research Centre and the Nanotechnology and Integrated Bio Engineering Centre along with the Biomedical Sciences Research Institute.

The multi-purpose Belfast Waterfront complex can host conferences for up to 2,000 delegates while the walkway-linked Hilton hotel caters for events of up to 450 participants.

Dublin

As the second-largest exporter of MedTech products in Europe, Ireland supplies 95 of the world's top 100 countries, reflecting the development of its formidable medical device products sector.

Suzanne McGann, head of Marketing and Communications at The Convention Centre Dublin, said: "We have also seen conferences in this sector develop beyond just medical and pharma meetings to embrace other areas including technology. We enjoy excellent collaboration between



The multi-purpose Belfast Waterfront complex



The Convention Centre Dublin

“Ireland supplies 95 of the world's top 100 countries with MedTech products”

the industry, state agencies, regulatory authorities and universities in driving research and development nationwide.

"The high-tech Convention Centre Dublin operates well within pharma code guidelines making it highly attractive for medical meetings. We work closely with other city venues, particularly for social events, including the Georgian period Royal College of Physicians in the centre of Dublin city, which dates back to 1564, Trinity College, which commands a heritage

dating from 1592, the Guinness Store House, the Royal Hospital Kilmainham and, of course, the CCD itself. Regulations affecting catering costs may, of course, impact the choice of venues used for medical events," she added.

"Our 2018 calendar includes an event involving a major pharmaceutical company with 1,800 delegates using up to 15 hotels in the city. The 32nd International Congress on Occupational Health takes place in April with 2,500 delegates and a large expo. Then the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis (ISTH) 64th Annual Standardization Committee will run over four days in July with an expected 2,500 to 3,000 international delegates. And the 9th World Congress of the World Institute of Pain will be bringing 2,000 delegates to the city in May.

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BioValley
(Switzerland, Germany, France)

One of Europe's leading life science clusters, BioValley uniquely spans across three countries, Switzerland, Germany and France, and includes the global life science hub in Basel. In all the cluster includes 100,000 students at ten universities and research institutions including the Max Planck Institute, Freiburg University and the University Basel plus some 14 technology parks.

BioValley has more than 50,000 working in life sciences, with 600 companies developing therapeutic,

diagnostics and medical devices to address a wide range of diseases in multiple therapeutic classes. The presence of two of the largest global pharma companies in the world, Roche and Novartis, stimulates the development of other ventures including Basilea Pharmaceutica, Actelion Pharmaceuticals, Transgene and Santhera Pharmaceuticals.

The Congress Center Basel (CCB), recently hosted the 47th World Congress of Surgery staged by the International Society of Surgery with 2,000 participants from across all

continents, including 200 students. Main sessions were complemented by a programme that featured Bottmingen Castle, the picturesque Hotel Krafft and a dinner cruise on the Rhine. Claude Nicollier, the only Swiss astronaut to have ventured into space, delivered a captivating keynote address.

Basel also hosted the 16th Annual Biotech in Europe Forum with more than 600 delegates and 100 presenting companies involved in 12 plenary panels/workshops and more than 1,500 one-to-one meetings. It was the third time the CCB had welcomed the event.

Malaysia

Malaysia's genial and architecturally-spectacular capital Kuala Lumpur provides a reasonably-priced location in the middle of Asia and is proving increasingly popular especially with organisers and delegates from the developing world.

It enjoys strong support from the Ministry of Health and the national convention bureau, MyCEB, which specialises in providing education on conference management to local associations.

Izad Ismail bin Abdullah, PR &

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The Congress Center Basel

Check out our new mobile responsive site at

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Venue-Source.com makes finding your next venue simple. Use our **special offers** section for the latest deals or search in a variety of ways and use our **compare** feature to review your shortlist easily.



JUST LAUNCHED

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Communications Manager with Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau, said: “Local pharma companies always adhere to local conduct codes and Malaysia offers plenty of meeting venues that meet the pharma codes. Of course, they impact the expenses incurred by such companies in hosting delegates attending medical conferences.”

The events schedule at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre features the 6th World Congress of Total Intravenous Anaesthesia & Target Controlled Infusion in August, the World Cancer Congress 2018 in October, the Urological Association of Asia Congress in August 2019 and the Biennial Scientific Meeting of the Asia



Grimaldi Forum Monaco

Pacific Paediatric Endocrine Society in September 2020.

Beyond KL’s richly exotic enticements, delegates can savour plenty of CSR activities including tree-planting at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia and orangutan and elephant conservation in Sabah and Sarawak.

Monaco

Monaco may be one of the glitziest square miles of tourism territory in Europe yet, these days, it is developing an awesome reputation as a fully-compliant destination for many forms of healthcare congresses.

The Principality’s expertise in an imposing spectrum of medical disciplines is spearheaded by the specialist teams at Princess Grace Hospital, the Medical and Surgical Orthopaedic Institute of Monaco, the Monaco Cardiothoracic Centre, Monaco Scientific Centre, Monaco Haemodialysis Centre and the Rainier III Gerontology Centre.

And from this month the MedTech Europe Code of Professional Ethics, governing all aspects of the industry’s relationship with health professionals and healthcare organisations within the context of congresses and events



Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre

organised by the profession, is set to commit the Principality to applying full transparency for all healthcare congresses.

Catherine Decuyper, CEO of EuroMediCom, said: “Choosing Monaco as a venue for the Anti-Aging World Congress was one of the keys to its success. Monaco is an exceptional destination on many counts: superbly located and with a climate that is mild almost all year round. Monaco Tourist and Convention Authority is a real partner, keen to offer help and advice at all stages and the Grimaldi Forum is a perfect congress centre, set in an amazing location and run by highly professional staff. The hotels are also real partners, who listened to our needs and took time to welcome each of our 8,000 participants as individuals.” ■

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The Rock Hotel, 3 Europa Road, Gibraltar
 (+350) 200 73000 events@rockhotel.gi www.rockhotelgibraltar.com