

INTERVIEW: JOHAN VOS, FIGO

Congress Raises World Concerns



The **International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO)** is a global organization representing 130 national societies of obstetricians and gynecologists around the globe. With an average of 8,000 participants, the FIGO World Congress held in Brazil recorded an impressive 20 percent increase in participants. Johan Vos, Chief Executive, shares with us the innovative ideas implemented during the event, and how the multi-language campaign has helped raise world concern about woman's health.



Johan Vos
CEO, FIGO

FIGO 2018 was the biggest congress ever. How did you achieve this?

Johan Vos: We developed a series of innovative tactics aimed at boosting abstract submissions, registrations and increasing the overall visibility of the event. For this, new initiatives were introduced around three main areas: communication, education and partnerships.

Can you share some of these new initiatives and their results?

Vos: One initiative was the introduction of the 'Hello Doctors' sessions consisting of 15-minute speeches whereby women with a personal experience of a serious women's health and/or rights issue were invited to share their story and raise awareness about these issues. Never in the history of FIGO have we seen session rooms with so many attendees. The rooms were full, and the audience gave a standing ovation for every Hello Doctors speaker.

Another area where we concentrated efforts was in strengthening partnerships with our member societies by providing them with the best support possible to attend the congress, including free registrations for their Presidents, reduced group registrations, free stands in the exhibition and sessions within the scientific program. Finally, we launched a three-language digital campaign, in English, Spanish and Portuguese, using Google and Facebook and the hashtag #EveryWomanMatters in all communications. This campaign not only helped raise

the profile of the organization globally but also contributed to the 20 percent increase in registration numbers and the 25 percent increase in sponsorship revenues.

Tell us more about the hashtag #EveryWomanMatters?

Vos: From mainly focusing on medical issues, FIGO has repositioned itself to fully embrace the wider topic of women's health and this is reflected by our congress and other events covering cutting-edge science as well as public health and policy. We see physicians and other related healthcare professionals as key stakeholders for women's health and rights, and we want FIGO to be the global voice for women's health. The popular hashtag contributed to reaching a community of almost 175,000 Facebook followers and has increased our Google search by 301 percent.

Can you share your fondest memory of the FIGO 2018 congress?

Vos: FIGO's vision is for women of the world to achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives and 2018 was the year of change. Looking at this year's success, I feel we have brought together the whole community of women, healthcare professionals, researchers, campaigners and policymakers to work towards this vision and raised global awareness about women's health issues. ●

INSIDE VIEW: JUAREZ CARVALHO



Juarez Carvalho
Director of Operations
MCI Brazil

With so many unexpected participants, how did you manage to solve onsite logistical challenges?

Juarez Carvalho: With 3,000 extra participants, we had to rethink the initial congress planning and layout. To make sure nothing was left on the side, we created a 'crisis committee' to solve day-to-day challenges, such as the reallocation of rooms and the creation of extra spaces overnight to avoid overcrowded rooms. The committee, composed of staff and leaders, would meet every morning before show time. The onsite team demonstrated incredible proactivity in finding last-minute solutions.

With half of the participants coming from the LatAm region, how did you ensure the local community would get their own visibility?

Carvalho: The language of the congress is English so to make sure all LatAm participants would get access to content, we organized simultaneous translation in both Spanish and Portuguese. A special track to address local challenges was designed for the Brazilian attendees with the support of the **Brazilian Federation of Associations of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FEBRASGO)**. To ensure the local community was engaged from the start, preliminary researches were done to engage with Brazilian academics.

What achievement are you most proud of for FIGO 2018?

Carvalho: Women's health is a concern not only in Brazil but everywhere in the world. For this reason, I am extremely proud to have contributed to the success of this global congress and somehow help raise awareness. FIGO's leadership was always very open to our discussions which contributed to the smooth execution of the event. Seeing the satisfaction from all stakeholders, delegates, speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and FIGO's leadership is to me the biggest personal achievement. ●