

## Congress Diary: Day 1 - NMO Training



I arrived in Paris on Wednesday 4th July in preparation for the Global National Member Organisation (NMO) training which takes place from Thursday 5th July to Sunday 8th July. This is my first time attending the training so I was very much looking forward to it.

After mingling and being introduced to other NMO delegates last night, an early night was had. Incidentally the first few delegates I met happened to be Jose and David from Spain, Kristijan from Croatia, Steffan from Germany, Daniel from Romania and Charalampos from Greece, and I wondered was I back in Poland at Euro 2012 or was I really in Paris. And yes of course football was the topic of conversation not haemophilia, so I felt at home, but I am sure it will be down to business in the morning.



*Here I am with Amanda Bok from WFH at the NMO training workshop*

So I have just finished my first day of training and it was terrific really! I enjoyed it a lot. Firstly everyone was brought together for introductions followed by an ice breaker which was great fun. The new CEO of the World

Federation of Hemophilia (WFH) Mr. John Bournas and President Mr. Mark Skinner gave updates on the WFH as an organisation, followed by updates on the strategic plan and the Global Alliance for Progress (GAP) programme after which a group photo was taken. It's hard to believe there are 103 delegates from countries around the world here at the training and I wonder how I will find the time to talk to every single one of them.



*Here I am with delegates from France, Macedonia, Sweden and USA at the training*

In the afternoon I attended a workshop for established organisations on advocacy strategies. I gave a ten minute presentation on nurturing the media during this workshop. It was great to hear perspectives from other countries on advocacy strategies and a couple of very important points that seemed to come up again and again was that it is very important to have a united organisation and that education and training was key.

Later the full group joined for dinner followed by more introductions and chat. Overall it was a very well organised, interesting and informative first day at the global training. There is a nice atmosphere, delegates are warm and friendly and I am looking forward to tomorrow already.

**Debbie Greene**

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## Congress Diary: Day 2 - NMO Training



This morning I joined the established groups for a morning of workshops on the assessment of haemophilia societies. The group was split into 4 groups and each country was asked to identify 3 challenges facing their organisation in the next 5 years. Mine were maintaining our current comprehensive care, maintaining our current funding, and succession planning. Mr. Brian O'Mahony, Ms. Elizabeth Myles and Ms. Amanda Bok from the WFH facilitated this workshop. The top 4 challenges that countries seem to be facing are life cycle membership, maintaining comprehensive care, maintaining funding and political advocacy. A good discussion took place in relation to these challenges. Later during the workshop Bernard from the UK spoke about funding and how their organisation obtains funding, Val from the USA spoke about the use of social media and how it works for his organisation, I spoke about our volunteer recruitment plan and succession planning, and Radoslaw from Poland spoke about economics and data collection.



*At the training we were divided into groups and asked to identify challenges facing the Societies - the training has been very beneficial for me*

In the afternoon there was a plenary talk on fundraising which was chaired by the new WFH CEO Mr. John E. Bournas. He spoke about philanthropy, your case for support, networking, how it is important to tell donors how the funds are being used and how important it is to thank people. He suggested putting together a strategic plan for fundraising and to think about hiring professionals. We then listened to presentations from Megan from Nigeria, Catriona from New Zealand, Yudiana from Panama, and Solange from Lebanon. They all gave examples of how they fundraise within their organisation from raffles to gala dinners to having professional organisations raise funds.



*Here I am with Dr. Nueygen from the Vietnam Society who are our current Twinning Partners*

Another enjoyable day here at the NMO training, time is flying by. I met more new people today who I had not met before and I was delighted to see our twinning partners and friends Hoan and Vuong from Vietnam again.

***Debbie Greene***

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*Delegates from France, Australia, Austria and Greece at the training*

I arrived late on Thursday to facilitate a workshop at the NMO training. As usual, it was a great pleasure to see many old friends but also very encouraging to see so many new and young participants from countries from all parts of the world. We gather in the somewhat surreal surroundings of a Hotel near Euro Disney where workshop participants and people with haemophilia mingle in the lobby with families including excited children, wearing Mickey Mouse ears, eagerly anticipating their day at the Disney Park.

The Workshop on Friday morning ran for four hours and was attended by participants from 20 Countries drawn from the more economically resourced or wealthier countries (which, reassuringly includes Ireland despite our current economic difficulties!). We brought the participants through a process where they had to identify the major challenges facing their organisations in the next 5 years. Many common themes and challenges emerged including maintaining or diversifying funding, maintaining comprehensive care and increasing the participation of members and young people in Haemophilia Societies. Specific challenges were also addressed including social media, collaboration on collection of data and volunteer recruitment and succession planning (where Debbie Greene from the IHS gave a presentation).

Later in the day, further sessions took place on fundraising. The training workshop is a Pre-congress event which is attended primarily by Haemophilia Society nominated delegates. It is less frantic and busy than the main congress and therefore it is an ideal opportunity to also arrange face to face meetings with individual countries and delegates. Today, I had meetings with delegates from Serbia, Romania, UK, Philippines, Slovenia and Saudi Arabia.

***Brian O'Mahony***

## Congress Diary: Day 3 - Final Day of NMO Training



Today's session started with clinical research. A panel of experts including Mr. Alok Srivastava, Mr. Mark Skinner, Ms. Alison Street, Mr. Magdy El Ekiaby and Mr. Deon York gave excellent presentations on the roles and responsibilities of patient organisations and understanding the different types of research. The challenges of clinical trials was also discussed. During lunch countries bidding for the 2016 and 2018 Congress had booths set up promoting their bids. It seemed like a lot of effort and hard work was put into the booths and all 4 countries seemed very popular indeed. Our neighbours from the UK who are bidding for Glasgow in 2018 very cleverly used tartan fabric to promote Glasgow. We wish them all the best in their bid.



*Bernard Manson, Chair of the UK Haemophilia Society and Liz Rizzuto, former Chair of the Society at the UK Society's booth. The UK Society are bidding the host the Congress in Glasgow in 2018.*

Ms. Paula Bolton Maggs chaired the afternoon session which included presentations on youth issues, an overview of the General Assembly and the election process, the constitution, and a questions and answers session followed by an evaluation and closing. We also got the opportunity to listen to the two Presidential Candidates Mr. Alain Weill from France and Mr. Cesar Garrido from Venezuela. Each candidate was given 5 minutes to give a presentation to the delegates in relation to why we should vote for them followed by a 30 minute questions and answers session.

Afterwards the Executive Committee of the WFH explained their roles within the organisation which was very interesting. All in all another great day at the training.

Later in the evening a banquet took place followed by lots of dancing. It's hard to believe the training is finished I honestly don't know where the time went. I enjoyed it a lot, learned a hell of a lot, met some really nice people from all parts of the world, and I have to say being involved in the organisation of conferences and events in our own organisation the staff team at the WFH have done a terrific job organising the NMO Training so thank you all very much.



*Deon & Catriona from New Zealand, Alain from France and Charalampos from Greece*



*The WFH staff with some delegates who attended the training*

Le Palais De Congress here we come!

**Debbie Greene**

## Congress Diary: Day 4 - Official Opening of the 2012 WFH World Congress



A few sleepy heads met in the airport at 5.15am on Sunday morning. It was an early start for Nina, Ger, Traci, Dara, Gareth and I. When we landed in Paris it was no rest for the wicked as we negotiated our way to the shuttle bus which was arranged to drop us to the Palais de Congress. On arrival at the conference centre we realised just how huge it is, with a hotel, numerous shops and countless meeting rooms right in the middle of the city. The registration was a buzz of activity. Our first familiar face was none other than Dr. Mai from Vietnam, even though it was a short time since their visit to Ireland it was really lovely to catch up with her. After regaling the rest of our group with our travel tales it was time to get down to business....lunch! From lunch it was straight back to the conference centre for registration and to set up our publications. As this is my first congress, I was not sure what to expect. The exhibition area is huge and everything is extremely well planned and logistically Palais de Congress is so central and easy to access. There are lots of volunteers available to help guide people around the Congress centre and there is always a familiar face to be spotted. After a quick change it was time to meet up with the group and attend the Opening Ceremony.



*The WFH Booth in the Conference Centre, there are plenty of staff and volunteers to assist delegates.*

Mr. Mark Skinner President of WFH highlighted that this 30th anniversary of the WFH Congress was another record breaker with over 5,200 registering to attend from over 130 countries. The Opening Ceremony was most importantly the launch of the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the WFH. Mr. Mark Skinner said that the Congress would give the organization the opportunity to reflect over the successes, lessons learned and future challenges that face the worldwide community of people living with bleeding disorders.





*Opening Ceremony of the WFH World Congress*

The Opening Ceremony was also used as the time to announce the official launch of the Close the Gap Program - Mark highlighted the continued need for better treatment for people with haemophilia and other bleeding disorders worldwide. It is incredible to think that 75% of the people with haemophilia do not have adequate treatment. A moving video was played from a treatment centre in Senegal that highlighted the work that both the dedicated doctors in the centres do and also the incredible work of the WFH Close the Gap Program in relation to helping educate medics and providing guidance to countries as regards treatment and advocacy.

After a wide range of speeches and introductions to the organisers of the congress the Opening Ceremony came to an end and people were invited to the exhibition area for a reception. This gave us the opportunity to catch up with other delegates and of course the rest of the Irish Contingent. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening and we are all looking forward to a day of lectures and workshops tomorrow.



*I.H.S. Contingent at the Congress*

**Fiona Brennan**

## Congress Diary: Day 5



Today started with a number of sessions ranging from "Clinical Trial Design in Hemophilia" to "Rare Bleeding Disorders" to, what was probably the highlight of the morning, a talk on "Adherence", which discussed the influences of patient education in adherence and studies on adherence in young people.



*The WFH GAP Programme was discussed at the Congress*

WFH President, Mr. Mark Skinner, gave an inspiring address on the "Close the GAP" Campaign, newly launched by the WFH to help mark its 50th anniversary.



*IHS CEO Brian O'Mahony took part in a debate on prophylaxis - several IHS staff and committee members are speakers and chairs at the Congress*

The afternoon session which stood out the most was the "Seeing Both Sides Debate" which gave an insight into how patients and organisations prepare and manage meeting with a Ministry for Health. The session also covered the pitfalls and the tools you need to be aware of for a successful meeting.

Today the IHS had had 3 posters on display, one speaker in the debate, one person chairing a session and IHS staff and members covering each talk during the day. Anne Duffy was also re-elected onto the WFH Psychosocial Committee - Congratulations to Anne.



*IHS staff member Nina Storey at her poster display - the IHS have eight posters on display at the Congress*

## Congress Diary; Day 6



Day two of sessions kicked off at 8.45am this morning. There are such a variety of sessions to attend. This morning I attended the session on "Youth: preparing future generations". With speakers from France, New Zealand, Peru and Canada, it was quite a varied and interesting session. The societies are eager to get and keep their younger members involved and for some countries this can prove quite a challenge. It was also really encouraging to realise that the Irish Haemophilia Society are engaging with our young members in most of the same ways as the other countries. The need to plan for succession and to encourage ownership of the society within the membership was also discussed. It definitely provoked some interesting comments and discussion amongst the attendees.

Next up was the plenary session of personalised prophylaxis. A lot of research is ongoing in this area and some of the studies discussed were very interesting from a medical point of view.



*IHS Treasurer, Ger O'Reilly and IHS member Michael Davenport at the IHS Booth - the booth allowed people to view the IHS publications and chat to IHS staff.*

After this session it was nice to catch up with other delegates and of course our Irish group, there are so many familiar faces in the exhibition area and it is amazing how many people have come over to our stand to have a chat and a look through our publications.

Back to the sessions again and next up was E-communications. There was varying takes on this session in relation to how social media can be used from contacting patients in Kuwait, to lobbying and patient involvement in the UK.

Blogs were also a big feature of this session - unsurprisingly many countries have found that blogs are a great way to get people talking and sharing their experience.



*Here I am at the poster display with the poster I submitted on "The Participation of Children in National Haemophilia Conferences"*

Next up for me (what a day!!) was the poster display. Nuala and I completed a poster on volunteer recruitment and I must say this was one of my highlights of the day, it was so nice to chat to do many different people and hear about their experiences. I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Last session of the day was psychosocial models in haemophilia, chaired by our very own Anne Duffy. Experiences from Brazil, the Philippines and Australia were shared. Throughout all of these sessions it never ceases to amaze me how dedicated the haemophilia team - whether they are haematologists, nurses, social workers or volunteers, are to their patients. It is so encouraging to hear how these people are really willing and wanting to go that extra mile for the well-being of their patients.

Finally to end the evening we heading to the amphitheatre to enjoy the Cultural Evening and enjoy we did!! Fantastic performances from mime artists, hippy jazz band (never knew such a thing existed), circus acts and can-can dancers entertained the audience for almost two hours. After that it was time for a bite to eat, a drink and most importantly more catching up with old and new friends!



*Entertainment at the Cultural Evening*

It's hard to believe tomorrow is Wednesday, it's all going so fast but we are all enjoying every minute!

**Fiona Brennan**

## Congress Diary: Day 7



This morning a twinning meeting with our partners from Vietnam was arranged and attended by Brian O'Mahony and myself before the third day of the Congress started. Also at the meeting were representatives from the WFH, the treatment centre in Melbourne and of course our partners from Vietnam. The proposed visit by the haemophilia team from Melbourne in October, led by Professor Alison Street was discussed. It is hoped that a physiotherapy workshop for physiotherapists will take place, along with training for patients also in physiotherapy. Dr. Tran from Melbourne will also present some lectures to the doctors in relation to haematology. From an organisational perspective Brian O'Mahony will travel to Vietnam in October also at the same time to do some work with patients and key volunteers in Ho Chi Minh City and will also work with the organisation in Hanoi on a governance structure for the board. Professor Tri and Dr. Mai also hope to have a meeting arranged with the Minister for Health during Brian's visit, and the Action Plan for 2013 will also be looked at. The plan looks good for October, I think we are making progress on this twinning programme which is very encouraging. A thanks goes to Robert from the WFH for organising and chairing this meeting.



*Representatives from the IHS, WFH and the Vietnamese Society for Congenital Bleeding Disorders attended a Twinning Meeting.*

**Debbie Greene**

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They say they save the best until last so therefore it was so surprise I was the last I.H.S. staff member to fly in to attend the WFH Congress in Paris. People who know me will know I am not the best morning person and my flight was very early so I am sure some of my colleagues were worried about seeing me, but after a nap on the plane I was in top form and greeted with smiles and welcome arms from everyone at the Congress not just my colleagues.

As this was my first WFH Congress I was a bit unsure what to expect and I must admit I was a bit overwhelmed when I was first arrived at the centre, the mere size of the centre alone cemented in my mind how big the Congress

actually was. Walking in, the professional set up of the Congress became apparent, there were volunteers around the concourse ready to help with any queries you had, delegates attending had their name badges and information around their neck and were scanned as they accessed the different sessions. This year the congress attracted over 5,200 people, with so many people I was aware that I might not get to see any of the people I knew from the different organisations, but I had only been in the building two minutes when I met Ed Keubler from the USA who is involved in the Parents Empowering Parents (PEP) programme.

Having received my registration badge and after a quick freshen up I was ready to face the day, which just so happened to begin with lunch!! I attended two sessions today, my first was on ageing and I must say this was a very frank and eye opening experience. The speakers highlighted some of the issues that are facing the ageing haemophilia population, but reminded people that everyone ages and will experience the same problems, but some will be more difficult for people with haemophilia. For example, bad eyesight this is something that happens to everyone, but for people with haemophilia who need to access their veins this can present an issue as they find it more difficult in accessing veins. Indeed veins were a big topic, with repeated use of some veins and with the natural sagging in the skin as we age, this is also making vein access more difficult. The speakers did offer solutions for this including vein rotation and various exercises. As many of you may know the I.H.S are working on a publication on ageing so I thought this session would provide a further insight into the issues facing the ageing haemophilia population, what I didn't realise is that issues then arise for families. It became apparent that a lot of people with haemophilia find it hard to ask their family for help as they feel they will be a burden, another issue was that the family are not educated on how to support their partner. This session really opened my eyes and I look forward to working on this I.H.S publication and learning more about this subject.

Before my second session I had the opportunity to look at the many posters on display about the different areas of work from the different organisations, I was delighted to get a chance to see one of the I.H.S posters!



*Here I am with Fiona Brenna at our poster on "The Participation of Children at National Haemophilia Conferences"*

After coffees the next session I attended was on sexual health. The session was very well attended and raised a lot of issues, not just about sexuality, but about confidence, self-esteem and relationship issues. Everyone who attended the session agreed that this is a topic not commonly spoken about and the question was asked "Who is responsible about talking to the patient about sex?" There were a lot of different perspectives, some thinking the nurse, others stating that it is not the responsibility of one person.

Following the sessions I attended a Twinning Reception held by WFH. The work of this programme is outstanding and it was interesting to hear the different stories.

It was a long first day for me, day seven for the others, but I am enjoying my first congress.

Until tomorrow.....

**Nuala McAuley**

## Congress Diary: Day 8



Thursday was the official last day of the Congress. Arriving at the Congress centre with Debbie Greene at 8.30am there were already crowds of delegates getting ready for sessions. My first session of the day was "Developing Educational Models". I was surprised that this session was not better attended as it was a good opportunity for the societies to witness what other societies had tried and tested, to get some ideas of what worked and didn't work for them and reasons why. The session had five speakers and each gave a different viewpoint of what their organisation offered to members. In particular I was interested in the Social Media aspect that Dan Farthing from the UK Society spoke on. Dan spoke of a discussion forum that the UK Society set up for young members, but unfortunately did not work. This was very similar to the I.H.S. discussion forum which was launched in 2010, but retracted in 2012. Dan gave an update that the UK Society are working with a company, Sixvibe, on developing an international youth site. Involving the young members was an issue also covered by Nadia Arkhipova from Russia, who spoke about the website for children with bleeding disorders that the Russian Haemophilia Society has for its younger members as well as "Haemophilia School" a self-infusion training camp. It was great to see that the areas other societies are working on are areas that the I.H.S. are also looking to develop. Between the restructure of the children and youth programmes at events, to the introduction of the "Junior Leaders Programme" and the use of social media the I.H.S. is on par with some of the organisations, but there are still some areas which we could explore and I for one am looking forward to finding out more. One aspect I asked about at the session was Webinars. Many of the countries find geography an issue when holding meetings, due to the vast size of their country. IT has become a way of life for people and holding live streaming of meetings or webinars would allow the society to reach more members. Jennifer Laliberte from Canada said this is something the WFH are exploring and will be updating NMO's on. Indeed the WFH were posting the sessions from the Congress on their website. It will be interesting to see if there will be an interest in Webinars for the WFH and other NMO's, this is definitely something to keep an eye on.



*Dr. Mai and Nguyen Quang Vuong from Vietnam with members of the IHS Committee and Staff during the coffee break.*

After this session there was a coffee break. The exhibition area was a hub of activity as delegates took the last chance to browse the different organisation stands and collect publications and relevant information.



Following the break I attended a Plenary Session on "Inherited Bleeding Disease Research". The session was very well attended and everyone there seemed to get something for the session, but unfortunately I found it very technical and hard to understand.

After a quick lunch it was time to attend the WFH Awards Ceremony, where awards were presented to "Twins of the Year" and "Twinning Centre of the Year". The ceremony, which lasted for over an hour, also saw individuals recognised for their voluntary and advocacy work and ended with a presentation to outgoing WFH President, Mr. Mark Skinner, who received a standing ovation and a rousing round of applause. Congratulations to all the winners.

My last session of the day was "Working Together; Lessons Learnt". This session focussed on the advocacy and PR work that the societies do. The message from this session was clear and strong, unity. Each speaker added their own incite to the message – Speak with one voice, Work together, Learn from each other. Through congresses and meetings and indeed the programmes of the WFH such as Twinning and GAP, societies are encouraged to work together, help each other and share ideas and experiences. This session promoted the societies and the work of the WFH.



*Members of the IHS and the Vietnam Society for Congenital Bleeding Disorders at the WFH Congress Gala Dinner.*

As the day drew to a close it was time for everyone to head back to their hotels and put on their glad rags for the Gala Dinner. Unfortunately the weather took a turn for the worse, but the rain didn't dampen the spirits of those who attended who enjoyed a scrumptious meal in the surroundings of a magnificent French Dining Hall. After dinner, delegates took to the dancefloor. A great night was had by all and I'm sure many carried on the party into the early hours of the morning, but I had an early night as I was attending the WFH General Assembly on Friday morning.

Bon Soir!!

***Nuala McAuley***

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Today is Thursday and it's the final day of the Congress. Again there was a good variety of talks to attend ranging from "Genetics of hemostasis", to "Developing Educational Models", to the "Management of the elbow joint". During lunch the WFH had an Awards Ceremony where volunteers were honoured for their work in the field of haemophilia. I was delighted to see our friend Piet DeKlein from Holland receive an award for all his work in physiotherapy. Some of you might remember Piet, he attended our October Conference a few years ago and gave some very good interactive physiotherapy sessions.

In the afternoon a very good debate took place in relation to "Longer acting products versus gene therapy". The subject of "Arthropathy" was also discussed and it was very interesting to hear perspectives from developing and developed countries on this subject. The importance of the patients' body awareness, auto-evaluation, empowerment and allowing self-help when things go wrong was discussed. The last talk that I attended was entitled "Working together: Lessons learnt". At this session Radoslaw from Poland spoke about the history of his organisation and what they have learned along the way. The Polish organisation have come such a long way in such a short amount of time.



*Charalampos from Greece, Debbie Greene and Daniel from Romania*

When the talks were finished the dismantling of the exhibition halls started immediately, and later in the evening a fantastic "Farewell Dinner" took place in "Le Pavilion Dauphine" which was followed by more dancing into the early hours of the morning. For me the Congress was over. After 9 days which included attending the National Member Organisation Training, then the Congress I have to say it was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. Obviously attending the training for the first time was the highlight of my trip, but I did learn lots, enjoyed meeting people from different nationalities and cultures, and have to say in my opinion the best session at the Congress was the "Debate: Seeing both sides" which Brian O'Mahony spoke at.

Tomorrow the General Assembly takes place. This is like our own AGM only much bigger. Our Chairperson Traci Dowling will represent the Society at the Assembly and will vote on behalf of the Society, with the Treasurer Ger O'Reilly on standby as the alternate delegate. At the Assembly the new President of the WFH will be voted into office for the next 4 years, and the countries for the 2016 and 2018 World Congress will be voted on. Good luck to Traci and Ger!

***Debbie Greene***

## Congress Diary: Day 9 - WFH General Assembly



At 8.30am on Friday delegates from all over the world gathered in Salons Concorde in the hotel Concorde La Fayette. In a scene like the UN, voting delegates sat in the middle of the room at their assigned places which were marked with the country name and flag. On the right hand side of the room where the alternate voting delegates, who would be called upon by the voting delegates to confer about the various elections. On the left side of the room, where I was, sat the various observers, the representatives for the future congress bidders and the electives. At the top of the room sat the WFH Executive Committee. The Assembly began with a minute silence in memory of various NMO members who had passed away since the 2010 WFH Congress.



*IHS Chairperson Traci Dowling who was the official voting delegate for the I.H.S. along with Treasurer, Ger O'Reilly, who was the official alternate delegate, discuss the election.*

The first item on the agenda was the proposition of four countries to become full NMO's of the WFH. Cameroon, Krizickstan, Oman and Qatar were all proposed and accepted as full NMO's of the WFH. Following this Afghanistan, Mauritius, Montenegro, Uganda and the United Arab Emirates were proposed and accepted as associate NMO's of the WFH. These countries will now benefit from the assistance and advice of the WFH as well as other NMO's. It was great to see the countries become members and the number of NMO's grow.

Similar to an I.H.S. AGM the next items on the agenda were the acceptance of the 2010 General Assembly minutes, the presentation of the CEO's report and the President's report, all of which were accepted by the NMO's.

Then the voting began, Chair of the General Assembly, Dr. Paula Bolton-Maggs explained the process announcing the collectors and tellers of the votes, which would all be done by secret ballot. The votes on the day included votes for committee members and more officers.

President of the WFH  
Two candidates ran for this position: Alain Weill from France and Cesar Garrido from Venezuela. Each candidate was given an allotted time to speak and following the speeches, the voting delegates were given five minutes to confer with their alternate delegate and place their vote. Although this was the first vote cast, the results were one of the last to be read out with Alain Weill from France winning the Presidential race. Congratulations to Alain on his new role, but also to Cesar Garrido on his nomination and excellent presentation.



*IHS Staff members Fiona Brennan, Debbie Greene, Anne Duffy and Nina Storey with the newly elected WFH President Alain Weill, France.*

**\* Vice President Medical**

Again there were two candidates for this role, each was given an allotted time to speak and then voting NMO's were again given five minutes to confer and place their votes. Congratulations to Alok Srivastava who was elected to the role of Vice President Medical.

\* Vice President Finance  
There was only one candidate for this role, Eric Stolte, current VP Finance. Chair, Dr. Paula Bolton Maggs asked the NMO's to vote on abstaining from a secret ballot and putting the vote for VP Finance to a general vote. NMO's accepted this option and then re-elected Eric Stolte as Vice President of Finance.

I must remind everyone that the date of the General Assembly was Friday July 13th and in living up to its "jinx" name the proceedings of the day were held up slightly by a power cut to our room. However, the hotel staff along with their WFH counterparts worked tirelessly to get things back up and running and in what seemed like no time at all we resumed the meeting.



*NMO's voting at the WFH General Assembly*

\* 2016 Congress Venue

It was the battle of the M's as Miami and Montreal went head to head to host the 2016 WFH World Congress. Each country was given 12 minutes to speak on why they should host the Congress and what they have to offer. Before either presentation Mr. Craig Mc Ewen, Congress & Events Director of WFH, gave some financial statistics on what the cost of holding the Congress in either country would be. Miami took to the podium first, followed by Montreal. Each presentation included a video of the facilities of the Congress Centre and on the city itself. As with the previous votes, NMO's were given five minutes to confer and place their votes. It was a close vote, but Miami won and will host the 2016 Congress.

\* 2018 Congress Venue

It might be six years away, but the last vote of the day was for the 2018 WFH Congress location. Following Mr. Craig Mc Ewen's statistics, Scotland then Mexico put forward their pitches again each country had a video to show the facilities and tourist attractions their cities had to offer. This presentation included a splash of colour as the Scottish presenters wore their tartan with pride, (yes there was a kilt) and Mexico donned their sombreros. Scotland's pitch won the votes of the NMO's and will host the 2018 Congress.



*Outgoing President, Mark Skinner, closed the General Assembly by thanking the WFH Committee and staff for all their hard work and making the 2012 Congress so successful.*

The day finished with outgoing President Mr. Mark Skinner presenting the outgoing Committee Members with a gift in recognition for their hard work. A standing ovation was given to Mark and the other committee members. One NMO thanked the committee and expressed concern with such big changes, but Mark ensured the NMO's that the people who the elected as committee members and officers of the WFH were more than qualified to take over and reminded everyone that the WFH is a global community to which every NMO has a part.

It was a very long, but enjoyable day and I was delighted to get the opportunity to attend as an observer. Congratulations to all those elected and indeed those nominated.

Until Melbourne in 2014, G'day Mate!!

***Nuala McAuley***