Regulatory awareness still needs improving

Following continuing efforts to promote awareness of pharmaceutical industry codes and regulatory constraints on sponsors for medical congresses, it is evident that ongoing communication is needed to ensure maximum understanding for all parties involved.

Dissemination of compliance topics – through the pages of IPCAA News, participation in joint educational events, presentations at conferences, responses to direct enquiries to IPCAA and other channels – remains a priority issue for this Association.

It is clear from recent discussions, that IPCAA is viewed as an authoritative and reputable source of information on this topic by stakeholders in the medical meetings industry. Many organisations and individuals continue to ask for more comment and information on the status, origins, formulation or implementation of pharmaceutical industry codes and their actual and potential impact on the evolution of medical events.

As parties concerned in the organisation of congresses understand more why their meetings should take account of industry’s regulatory conditions for ethical reasons, requirements become better reflected in relevant aspects of congress organisation, to the benefit of all involved. This is becoming increasingly relevant on a global basis, with developing activities in areas such as Asia and the Middle East.

It is most important to note that it is the Pharmaceutical Industry that developed the codes, focusing primarily on the interests of patients, in an effort to self-regulate its own ethical behaviour when interacting with healthcare professionals.

Industry monitors, revises and updates them and the codes are a reality which is not going to disappear. They are constantly evolving and in certain respects, the various international, regional and national codes are showing signs of alignment. Medical device industry has been following similarly strict compliance requirements in recent years, having also understood that there is positive value to be gained from this.

IPCAA urges those who are involved in any way with the organisation and preparation of medical congresses and other meetings, to pay due attention to regulatory aspects (IFPMA, EFPIA, local and corporate), ensuring their staff are adequately informed and educated on relevant details. If assistance is required, please contact us.

Pharmaceutical codes of conduct are a defined framework within which we all have to cooperate for the benefit of patients – let’s ensure everyone concerned realises this and respects our commitment.

Continuing under-awareness of the scope and content of industry codes of conduct creates misunderstandings and does little to contribute to greater efficiency in congress planning.

IPCAA will continue to address this matter within the framework of its ongoing activities and, in the short term, plans to undertake the following steps:

- Provide explanatory information on pharmaceutical industry codes, their aims and implementation.
- Consider offering training in compliance aspects for interested parties outside the IPCAA membership.
- Provide well-informed and knowledgeable guest speakers, at seminars, workshops and educational events arranged by other organisations in the meetings industry.
IPCAA goes virtual!

Volcanic ash clouds encourage use of new meetings format

Everyone will remember the air travel disruption caused by the ash cloud originating from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano in Iceland, which first brought chaos and inconvenience to thousands of people and organisations in mid-April.

IPCAA was also not immune from the effects of flight cancellations and airport closures; two planned events had to be cancelled because of the situation - the Council meeting and also the Housing Forum, planned for the period 19-21 April.

It proved to be a really trying time, with several of our Council members “trapped” in various locations around the world, desperately exploring possibilities to return home, quite apart from the challenge of getting to the meetings planned for Gothenburg!

This unfortunate scenario encouraged the implementation of something which the IPCAA Executive Group had been considering for some time – a virtual meeting, which was set up as a means of partially compensating for the loss of the Council meeting.

A WebEx event was quickly scheduled and took place in early May. Whilst not all Council members could join the WebEx, due to the continuing impact of the earlier problems on appointment diaries and revised commitments, there were useful discussions and exchanges from the participants involved.

Various topics were discussed during the two hour event and progressed via the combination of telephone and Internet links. Pre-prepared presentation material was displayed to support the information on which questions and discussions were based, resulting in the opportunity to review as a group significant issues such as budgets, task force projects, updates on educational activity and plans for future events. In addition, progress on the 2010 IPCAA strategic action plan was highlighted.

Most of those taking part were experiencing this format for the first time – everyone concerned felt the format offered a very useful way of setting up a positive interactive dialogue facility. However, not surprisingly, it was definitely seen, that however sophisticated any type of virtual event might be, the networking and “face to face” experiences provided by physical meetings are not to be ignored.

Nevertheless, the IPCAA team really feel that further virtual meetings of this kind could contribute to both improved communication as well as also delivering the benefit of cost savings compared with the conventional style of meeting. The Executive Group will continue to study this aspect further, in order to identify an appropriate future balance for IPCAA between virtual and physical meetings.
Face Time Campaign launched in USA
- emphasises benefits of “face to face” events

Responding to increasing challenges facing the meetings, convention and exhibition industries, major industry associations in the USA have aligned under the Convention Industry Council (CIC) to develop a unique grassroots industry effort to promote the benefits of meeting face-to-face.

The multi-faceted campaign, “FACE TIME. It Matters,” launched in January 2010 encourages organisations in the meetings and events industry to roll out the logo, theme and related marketing tools on members’ web sites, in trade partner and consumer advertising, and at their meetings, shows and events.

While virtual meetings and communications clearly have their merits (as mentioned on opposite page), there are strongly held opinions that face to face events have certain intrinsic benefits that are not reproducible in other meeting formats.

The advantages claimed are:
- Face-to-face meetings build trust and relationships
- Education and training delivered during meetings are more effective in a live setting
- Live meetings can actually save time and money
- Live meetings result in a more effective exchange of ideas
- Face-to-face meetings provide the human connection that powers business and scientific advance
- Face-to-face meetings create jobs and power the economy.

IPCAA feels this initiative in the USA is a useful reminder of the benefits of face to face meetings and the networking facilities they provide. However, with advances in the technology which supports virtual meetings, it would be unwise to consider this campaign as a statement that virtual meetings are without value. As we have previously stated, and particularly as technology evolves and circumstances also change, an appropriate and balanced combination of physical and virtual meetings, optimally exploiting the benefits of each, is probably the most likely development.
As we look back over a challenging year, many in the meetings industry are sifting through the ashes for lessons that can be profitably applied to a future that will inevitably include similar downturns. One of the most important of those lessons was the impact we saw on our image – an unprecedented questioning of the value that meetings and conventions deliver in the face of economic turmoil.

By early 2009 things had reached the point where surveys were showing high levels of concern about industry image, not only amongst planners but also the corporations that made up much of the meetings business base. And while these impacts were certainly most intense in the US - where audiences were being treated to nightly exposés of TV camera crews scouring resort properties in an effort to track down corporations who were daring to hold meetings - they demonstrated clearly a vulnerability that could appear anywhere in the world given similar conditions.

Governments were not our friends in this process. Not only did many question legitimate meetings and incentive-related business activity – particularly where public money was involved - but at the same time cancelled their own meetings and related travel as cost-saving measures, which only served to re-enforce that they placed little value on these kinds of activities.

The biggest eye-opener for most of us was the discovery that governments really had no idea what meetings do in terms of driving economic and professional development – and as a result, couldn’t see what kind of a role they could and should be playing in their own number one priority, which was economic recovery. At a time when we should have been recognised as a key element in stimulating the economy, we were instead being seen in many quarters as a part of the problem – at best, a dispensable expense and at worst, an example of the kind of corporate excess that created the economic problems in the first place.

What happened? And more to the point, what should we be doing about it?

For a very long time, we took it for granted that everyone saw meetings and conventions as good things. They brought people together. They advanced business and research. They generated revenue. They were green, compared with many other industry activities. How could anyone argue with this?

But as a result of this complacency, we neglected to prepare the arguments and develop the data that could respond to even the most superficial challenge. As a result, when that challenge came, we simply weren’t prepared to respond in any effective way. We didn’t have the messages; we didn’t have the data to back them up and we didn’t have the vehicles in place to deliver them effectively, so we were essentially sitting ducks for what followed.

And it’s not as though the signs weren’t there. The introduction of new codes governing investment by pharmaceuticals in medical
meetings signaled the beginning of a more serious approach to rationalising what meetings were all about. Government bailouts of corporations only increased the scrutiny applied to this question, and there was even an element of sustainability mixed in, with questions raised around the carbon footprint associated with business-related travel. But at the same time, many of us were still relying on leisure messaging to sell our products, reinforcing the notion that they were really primarily about having a good time.

Which begs the question: where do we go from here? Do we just hope that things will return to “normal” when the economy recovers or is it time to recognise we need an active and ongoing program to promote a better understanding of the meetings industry and the value it delivers?

If it’s the latter, there are a number of things that need to be addressed:

First, we need to emphasise the role that meetings play in economic, professional and educational development and downplay the leisure aspect. There has never been a greater opportunity for the industry as the world continues to look at the course recovery will take, and to search for any activities that can promise support in this regard, but to achieve this we need to be taken more seriously.

Second, we need to enhance both the content and perceived value of meetings in order to give planners and delegates the arguments they need to justify their investment of time and resources. In particular, we need to put more emphasis on the ability to demonstrate measurable outcomes that will resonate with increasing corporate concerns around ROI.

Third, we have to create new arguments to balance concerns around sustainability. The fact is that while we may have made huge advancements in green meetings and facilities, the only entirely “sustainable” meetings are those that don’t actually happen. There needs to be greater cost / benefit argument introduced to the discussion – to show how the benefits outweigh the inevitable impacts - and if we don't do this it’s hard to imagine who will.

Finally, we need to make the effort to deliver these messages at a local level where they have a greater impact and reality. That means we all have a role to play in delivering the message and can’t rely on that being done on a national or international stage by somebody else. It also means we need to create better measurement tools that actually work at that local level rather than simply focusing on “the big number”.

At the same time, it means we need to move beyond hospitality metrics and start figuring out how to attach demonstrable value to meetings outcomes. The fact is, nobody holds a meeting in order to fill hotel rooms – that’s simply a by-product – and yet most of our current industry measures relate to what delegates spend, not what they actually accomplish or learn. This trivialises meetings in the eyes of those who need to see them as engines for business and professional progress.

If this past year has demonstrated anything, it is how resilient our industry is in a time of economic chaos. Now it’s time to get that message – along with a broader appreciation of its value – out to the communities and governments whose support we need to survive and grow over the long term. At the same time, we need to recognise that as an industry, we’re all in this together and have a shared responsibility to address if we are going to get any serious results. It won’t be easy, and it won’t be quick. But if we don’t make a start now, we’ll be in the same position when we hit the next recession, and the same kinds of questions are raised again.

**IPCAA Comment**

Mr. Cameron's remarks are timely, in that the current environment in which pharma industry is operating creates more questions on effectiveness and applicability of congresses than ever before. It is important that the varying elements of the global meetings industry involved with medical meetings work together to appreciate and understand the current and future challenges facing a sector which represents a significant part of their overall activity.
IPCAA to participate at ICCA meeting

Hyderabad, India is the venue for this year’s ICCA Congress. ICCA (The International Congress and Convention Association) represents the main specialists in organising, transporting and accommodating international meetings and events, and comprises 900 member companies and organisations in 85 countries worldwide.

Its annual congress includes:

- A strong, custom-designed education programme for senior industry practitioners
- Business opportunities for all delegates throughout the event programme
- Exceptional networking, both high level and global in scope
- The opportunity to experience ICCA’s innovative use of technology

The programme runs from Monday 23 October to Wednesday 27 October 2010.

After discussion between the two associations, a high level educational session is being planned, in which the IPCAA President (Anna Frick) and the Vice President (Sylvia Fondanèche) will interact with other eminent speakers, to promote greater awareness and understanding of issues arising from the ongoing development and application of healthcare industry codes.

The location of the meeting itself, taking place in a region of the world which is demonstrating increasing activity and attention, will assist in making this session a highly topical and informative one. The involvement of IPCAA again confirms the prominent role of the Association in the communication of important pharmaceutical industry issues to a global audience.

(For more information on ICCA or the congress, please visit www.iccaworld.com)

HCA update

Representatives from HCEA, IAPCO and IPCAA – the three partners to the Healthcare Congress Alliance (HCA) – met in March.

A number of topics were discussed, including joint educational activities, general meeting trends, virtual vs. traditional meeting formats and problems associated with accommodation policies and processes at major congresses.

Based on input received, HCA plans to finalise a guidelines document for congress accommodation issues by October, as well as producing a document outlining the benefits of professionally organised healthcare meetings, working in favour of all stakeholders.

Continuing the agreement to participate at HCA partner meetings, Sylvia Fondanèche, IPCAA Vice President, made a presentation on developments and trends in medical congresses and challenges arising for PCOs at the IAPCO General Assembly in Athens in February.
Masterclass 2011 in Wolfsberg

IPCAA and IAPCO combine to offer advanced education course

Following extensive discussions, IPCAA and IAPCO (The International Association of Professional Congress Organisers) have agreed to cooperate in putting on a four-day high level educational event in parallel with IAPCO’s Annual Wolfsberg Seminar*, now in its 37th year.

The Masterclass event, from 17th to 20th January 2011, is designed specifically for those with six or more years of decision-making experience in the meetings industry. Whilst the programme has a focus on healthcare meetings, the content will also be of interest to those active in other market segments. The course will extensively address various advanced aspects relative to international meetings. (It must be emphasised this training is not suited to newcomers to the industry or to those who require training in general conference administration and organisation).

A top quality faculty, drawn from different sectors of the international meetings industry as well as healthcare congress supporters from the pharmaceutical industry, will deliver presentations on carefully selected topics – allowing plenty of time for discussion and interaction.

In order to enhance the learning process, the Masterclass will feature “lab sessions” in which smaller groups will discuss, review and research various issues in preparation for the Lab Session debate. There will be two debates on very relevant subjects to today’s industry where views greatly differ. The Lab Sessions will enable preparation based on interactive discussion, in order that cases (“for” and “against”) may be debated in a competitive environment.

The location for both events will be the renowned Wolfsberg Platform for Executive and Business Development Centre, Ermatingen am Untersee, CH-8272 Ermatingen, Switzerland.

For further information on Masterclass 2011 contact: IPCAA (secretariat@ipcaa.org), or IAPCO (info@iapco.org)

For further information on the IAPCO Annual Seminar visit the IAPCO website: www.iapco.org

*The regular IAPCO Annual Seminar will run from Saturday 15th to Thursday 20th January 2011. This is designed for anyone involved in the meetings industry, from beginners to experienced meeting planners, and covers the organisation of meetings.
IPCAA Council and Member Companies

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Vice President
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Treasurer
Ingrid Marti

Council Members
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Eli Lilly & Company
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Grunenthal GmbH
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Photography Credits
In the last edition of IPCAA News, which featured extensive coverage of the General Assembly, various images were used – these were all supplied by Leo Van Maanen, a member of the IPCAA Council.

Unfortunately, we omitted to acknowledge this contribution in IPCAA News 34, and would like to take this opportunity of expressing our thanks to Leo for his support.

IPCAA Events 2010/2011:

• Autumn/fall Council Meeting
October 20 & 21, 2010, Montreal, Canada

• Council Meeting
January 11, 2011, Gothenburg, Sweden

• General Assembly
January 12 & 13, 2011, Gothenburg, Sweden

Education update

December workshops on CME and Compliance
IPCAA’s well-supported workshops on CME and Compliance topics will again be running for members at the end of this year. These will take place in the usual “back to back” format, on:

December 8th 2010 – CME workshop
December 9th 2010 – Healthcare compliance workshop

The venue will be the Sheraton Hotel at Frankfurt airport. The workshops are free of charge to IPCAA members.

Members wishing to register for these workshops will be able to do so via the IPCAA website in due course. Full programme details will be made available at a later date.

Possible Compliance course for non-members
IPCAA is currently looking into the possibility of offering a one day workshop on 7th December 2010 in Frankfurt, aimed at non-members: typically, representatives from medical societies, meeting planners and PCOs for example. This event would provide comprehensive background into the regulatory constraints facing pharmaceutical sponsors of medical meetings and events, how industry codes are managed and interpreted into corporate policy, and also look at possible future regulatory trends.

Further details and fees involved will be published later, via the IPCAA website and other channels.

Any persons or organisations interested in participating in such a workshop, should contact IPCAA (secretariat@ipcaa.org) at any time.

Masterclass 2011: Joint venture with IAPCO
Further details can be found on page 7 of this newsletter.

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