ADC 2017: All about education

Melbourne welcomes dental community to biggest event to date

“This year’s congress is not limited by a theme”

An interview with Dr Gordon Burt, Chairman of the Scientific Programme Division for the 37th Australian Dental Congress (ADC)

From 17 to 21 May, the 37th Australian Dental Congress (ADC) 2017 is bringing together over 4,000 dental practitioners at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. Established in 1907 and organized by the Australian Dental Association (ADA), the event is set to be the biggest ever this year. Held under the theme “Educating for dental excellence”, ADC 2017 has attracted an impressive line-up of four keynote speakers: acclaimed UK prosthodontist Dr John Besford, UK periodontists and prosthodontists specialist Dr Andrew Dawood, endodontist Prof. Azil Kishen from the University of Toronto in Canada and prosthodontist Dr Ken Malmest from the US. With an additional 100 speakers from all over the world and a range of topics in all fields of dentistry, including dental public health, dental care, dental implants, and dental education, ADC 2017 is the biggest conference ever held in Australia.

Providing three and a half days of presentations and over 100 speakers, this year’s edition of the ADC will be the largest continuing professional development (CPD) event for dental practitioners in Australia in 2017. Today international spoke with Dr Gordon Burt about highlights and new additions to the Australian Dental Association’s (ADA) flagship event, such as the “whole of practice” sessions and the new Congress app and coffee, which he believes is one of the best things Melbourne has to offer.

The congress has a very diverse schedule of sessions. What did you aim at when composing the scientific programme?

This year’s congress is not limited by a theme. We have tried to organize the concurrent sessions of the main scientific programme into “procedural” (practical), “holistic” (patient-centered) and “blue sky” (visionary and creative) streams. For example, attendees have the opportunity to attend lectures that inform them of techniques they could apply in their practices on Monday morning, or confirm their contribution to the health of a patient, or learn about the future directions of the profession.

We have invited four keynote speakers from the UK, the US and Canada, as well as other international and local presenters. Including the “lunch and learn” sessions, there are more than 100 speakers. The congress also features programmes for dental hygienists, oral health therapists and dental therapists.

What is the proportion of attendees in these professions and have you noticed an increase in participation by these groups in recent years?

The ADA has selectively included allied dental health professions as part of the biennial congress since 2013. Two-day programmes are now offered to dental hygienists and therapists, dental assistants, practice managers and dental professionals. While these attendees make up a fraction of the total, they are none the less important. Generally, the participation figures are continuing to increase.

You have introduced a new congress app for recording of participants’ CPD hours. How does this work?

As well as providing general information about sessions and speakers, the congress app allows those attending the main scientific, dental hygienist and therapist, or dental assistant programmes to accrue CPD hours, by entering a unique code specific to the session they are attending into the app. The code is only displayed in the session venue.

For ADA members, the recorded CPD hours will flow back to the members’ CPD portal. For other participants, this information will form the basis of a CPD certificate of attendance for the congress. The app is available for smartphones and tablets.

Could you introduce the concept of the “whole of practice” sessions?

The “whole of practice” sessions are a first for the congress. The dental profession has always relied on various clinicians and support from others to provide the best care for an individual. To include those providers who work closely with the dentist is logical.

The opportunity for the whole team to attend lectures together is valuable in reinforcing the bond between us all and building mutual respect.

Melbourne is your home town. Could you give attendees some tips on making the most of their time in the host city after hours?

Walk the streets and be spontaneous. Melbourne is one of those cities that really need to be explored. Within a few metres from the congress site, there are arts venues, live music, clubs, bars, restaurants, lane ways and graffiti-and-coffee. In my opinion, it is the best in the world. One of Melbourne’s most successful international exports seems to be the barista. There are plenty of online publications that will tell attendees what is on (apart from the ADA events). Do not worry about the weather; there will be some—a coat and umbrella may be necessary.

Thank you very much for the interview.