

## The WFSA and the World Congress of Anaesthesiologists

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The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) was founded in 1955 in The Netherlands. When it was initiated, there were 28 founding Member National Societies and today this has extended to over 120. There have been a series of World Congresses of Anaesthesiologists (WCA) held in the name of WFSA since then and these are listed in Table 1. In recent years, other groups have held 'alternative' World Congresses, often focusing on specific sub-specialties, but there is only one WFSA sponsored WCA. This happens every four years in a different area of the world. Each WCA is organized by a national member society which imparts its own local flavour to the proceedings but there are a specific set of targets that need to be achieved by each Congress. Many people have discussed what defines a 'good Congress'. Such debate is outside the scope of this article and there can be no doubt that the perception of a Congress depends very much on one's own circumstances.

There are four main components of a WCA; firstly the delegates who spend their money to attend; secondly the trade exhibitors who invest large sums of money to support the meeting; thirdly the WFSA which has a series of constitutional obligations to meet and fourthly the local Conference Organizing Committee (COC). All of this activity is facilitated by the Professional Congress Organizer (PCO) who in this case is ChoiceLive from the UK (they also ran the Cape Town Congress of 2008).

I believe there are many different types of delegates but the majority attends the WCA to learn new aspects of their professional activity; this may be in terms of activities that take place in their own geographical region which are often highlighted by presentations from the WFSA Regional Sections. Others will be looking for new initiatives which may appear in programmes facilitated by specialist groups, like obstetrics or paediatrics, while others will be searching for answers relating to their professional development and organizational requirements. Many young (and old!) delegates will be presenting their own research or a distillation of their experience either at oral sessions but more commonly at poster sessions. Others will be looking to attend the plethora of workshops which are presented at the WCA.

One of the most important aspects of any WCA is the ability of delegates to meet others from different backgrounds and environments. The exchange of ideas and experiences that takes place within scientific sessions, but also over breakfasts, lunches and evening social gatherings, often leads to lasting friendships and facilitation of professional improvements in less affluent areas of the world.

**TABLE 1. World Congress of Anaesthesiologists**

<b>WCA</b>	<b>YEAR</b>	<b>CITY</b>	<b>HOST SOCIETY</b>	<b>REGION</b>
1st	1955	Scheveningen	Netherlands	Europe
2nd	1960	Toronto	Canada	North America
3rd	1964	São Paulo	Brazil	South America
4th	1968	London	United Kingdom	Europe
5th	1972	Kyoto	Japan	Asia
6th	1976	Mexico City	Mexico	South America
7th	1980	Hamburg	Germany	Europe
8th	1984	Manila	Philippines	Asia
9th	1988	Washington DC	United States	North America
10th	1992	The Hague	Netherlands	Europe
11th	1996	Sydney	Australia	Australia
12th	2000	Montreal	Canada	North America
13th	2004	Paris	France	Europe
14th	2008	Cape Town	South Africa	Africa
15 <sup>th</sup>	2012	Buenos Aires	Argentina	South America
16 <sup>th</sup>	2016	Hong Kong	China Hong Kong	Asia
17th	2020	To be decided by Venue Committee in Buenos Aires		

The trade exhibition is a vital aspect of any WCA. It permits the industrial companies operating in our sector to demonstrate their latest innovations and allows them to access anaesthesiologists from all over the world. They provide a huge funding boost to the meeting and their attendance, with the associated financial support, should never be taken for granted. Most delegates recognise the benefits of attending the trade exhibition to familiarise themselves with the latest innovations and, increasingly, they are also attending the growing number of 'scientific presentations' that occur within the exhibition

The WFSA has to undertake a series of administrative duties within the time frame of the WCA. All of the activities of the WFSA are governed by the General Assemblies (GAs) to which every member society, which has paid its annual membership fees, sends representatives in proportion to their number of announced member anaesthesiologists. These representatives accept the reports of the myriad of permanent and sub-specialty committees of WFSA and determine the future activity of the organization, often at the instigation of the elected Executive Committee and Officers. In addition the GA confirms the appointments of all members of all committees and, for the first time in Buenos Aires, will actively elect those standing for the Executive Committee and Officer posts. All WFSA committees have the opportunity to meet at the WCA and plan their activity for the next 4 years.

The COC, besides wishing to run a memorable meeting, wants to provide for the delegates that attend a flavour of their country and culture. As the 2012 Congress President Alfredo Cattaneo writes:

*“By going to the 15<sup>th</sup> WCA you will really have the world of anaesthesia at your fingertips. Our Scientific Program for the 15<sup>th</sup> WCA will try to globalize the level of knowledge and practice of anaesthesia through:*

- *Reporting progress and knowledge in anaesthesia*
- *Promoting the best anaesthetic practice*
- *Improving your skill in workshops*
- *Promoting safe practice in anaesthesia*
- *Encouraging organisation of anaesthesiologists.*

*The Scientific Program will cover the latest scientific knowledge in different areas of Anesthesiology, Perioperative Medicine, Intensive Care, Emergency Medicine and Pain Management. Topics will include research, organization, economy and education. The preliminary programme will be available shortly. It will be comprehensive and diverse, representing the needs of our colleagues from all around the world. You will surely be able to find the best level of lectures not just at the cutting edge of the science of anaesthesiology, but also the ‘ABC’ of the safe practice of our specialty, for those delegates looking for this information. We hope to have only electronic poster sessions to save delegates having to transport bulky posters. Workshops will have a special priority in this WCA, with simulations and the latest technology designed to improve our access to new skills. Our aim is to improve the skill and knowledge level of all of our colleagues coming to Buenos Aires.*

*Be sure that there will be a lot of science, but there will be also a lot of fun! We are developing a wide variety of social and cultural programmes – there will be tango lessons, parties, and the ever present possibility of tasting our famous cuisine including fantastic barbecues which will be surely enjoyed by you all. I am confident you will feel very comfortable living with our Argentinean culture and it will provide you with a unique opportunity to make new friends in the world of the anaesthesia.*

*Buenos Aires is Argentina’s capital city, with easy access from almost anywhere in the world. It’s breadth of attractions make it an excellent city for hosting the World Congress. These attractions include shows, theatres, sports, museums, art shows, antiquarians, shopping, and of course, as I mentioned before, our gastronomy. Before, and/or after the WCA you can also enjoy the many interesting tourist possibilities that Argentina can bring you such as:*

- *Iguazú Falls, one of the wonders of nature*
- *Perito Moreno Glacier, a fantastic place to visit*
- *Patagonia, a very different landscape*
- *Mendoza’s wineries and wines*
- *Mar del Plata, very nice beaches*
- *Córdoba, beautiful and peaceful hills*
- *Litoral, with the fantastic Paraná River*

*There are so many places you will surely feel that this WCA is a unique opportunity to mix science and leisure. It will be an unforgettable experience.  
It will be a great pleasure for us to meet you in Buenos Aires!"*

I am sure you will all agree he 'paints' a very attractive picture.  
Of course our PCO, ChoiceLive, is eager to facilitate your attendance at the Buenos Aires WCA and has the following advice for those who want to attend:

*The website [www.wca2102.com](http://www.wca2102.com) is the 'definitive source' for all information relating to the congress and your attendance. You will be able to register, book workshops, book accommodation (designed to suit all budgets) and select any tourist activities all 'on line'. The website will have full details of the scientific programme, posters, social programmes, exhibitors, sponsors and much more. Hopefully it will answer any of your questions relating to the congress, but, if you do still need further information or help then just 'contact us'. The information on the website is being constantly updated and if you want to be sure you don't miss any important deadlines (such as poster submission dates, closing of early registration) then make sure you register your interest on the website and we will send you timely reminders.*

A few final comments. The WCA needs to be a financial as well as a scientific success so that the WFSA can continue to run its extensive programme of educational, publication and safety activity all around the world. The membership dues of the member societies do not fund this activity which comes almost entirely from the surpluses generated by the WCA. This in part determines the registration fees charged for the delegates. We hope you will attend the WCA in Buenos Aires. It will be a scientific, social and cultural triumph and, if you are not there, then for years in the future you will hear from those who were that phrase "Ah but you should have been there in 2012 in Buenos Aires; that was a truly great meeting." Oh and start taking your Tango lessons soon!

25-30 March 2012 is the date for the next World Congress of Anaesthesiologists  
in Buenos Aires, Argentina; start planning NOW.