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## HISTORY OF OPHTHALMOLOGY IN MEXICO

### Mexico: Host of the 2016 World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC2016)

The city of Guadalajara, Jalisco will be the site of the next World Ophthalmology Congress, which will take place February 5th through the 9th of 2016. The organization of an event of this magnitude forces us to make a series of tasks to accomplish the mission that Mexican Ophthalmology has committed to.

The World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC) is the oldest of all of the conventions of any medical specialty in the world. In 1857, those interested in our branch of knowledge met for the first time in Brussels, Belgium.<sup>1,2</sup> Two hundred and fifty participants from 31 countries attended that first unprecedented parlay, inaugurating in this way international gatherings with a medical specialty theme.<sup>1,3</sup> That was not an isolated event, these followed: Paris, in 1862, and 1867; London, in 1872; New York, in 1876; Milan, in 1880; Edinburgh, in 1894; Utrecht, in 1899; Lucerne, in 1904 and Naples in 1909.

With the arrival of the First World War, these conventions were interrupted being that the majority of the representatives came from the European continent.<sup>2</sup> But the tradition to engage in order to strengthen our specialty had already been fruitful. Since then, in very diverse forums, international ophthalmology meets to share experiences, resolve unknowns and contribute to the dissemination of knowledge in our specialty.

In 1927, in the Netherlands, in the spirit of consolidating the organization of these reunions, the world leaders of ophthalmology were summoned and agreed for the creation of the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) whose purpose would be the organization of the international ophthalmology and periodically hold the world conventions.<sup>4</sup>

Today, the ICO gathers 88 national societies, amongst which is our Mexican Society of Ophthalmology; 30 international societies of the existing subspecialties, and 6 societies or associations of ophthalmology of a multinational order, namely: the Pan-American (PAAO), the European (SOE), the Asia Pacific (APAO), the Sub-Saharan (African), the Pacific (Australia and New Zealand) and the Arab and Middle Eastern (MEACO).<sup>5</sup>

It is a tradition exacted by the ICO that the sites of the world congresses rotate continents periodically,<sup>6</sup> therefore, the latest have been held in Europe (Berlin) and Middle East (Abu Dhabi) respectively; the East (Tokio) in 2014 and America (Guadalajara) in February of 2016.

Since 2010, during the WOC which took place in Berlin and with true majority vote of the accredited members of the ICO, Guadalajara was selected as the site of the 2016 WOC.

Previously, when applying to be the host country, Mexico arrived with the endorsement and the commitment of the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology and an agreement contract of the general conditions by which this event will be organized.

Without a doubt, some of the reasons why Mexico was selected had to do with the quality of the convention center of Guadalajara, its adjacency to the major part of the hotel capacity, the recent success history of the Pan-American congresses and the clarity and transparency with which these have been managed. All of this, summed to a closely knit Ophthalmological Society, with a long-standing history and a thriving future, were the catalysts due to which for the second time in the history of World Congresses of Ophthalmology, Mexico was awarded to be the site of this event (the first WOC where Mexico was host, was in 1970 in the city which is our capital).<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, with previous approval of the SMO, the Organization Committee has been expanded to incorporate an important number of Mexican ophthalmologists who will be organizers of the Mexican Congress of Ophthalmology that year which will fuse with the activities of the World Congress with the purpose of letting the world know the current state of our ophthalmology and in this way be able to share our scientific concerns in an international setting.

We are sure of its success. We will succeed for Mexico and for our ophthalmology.

It's an opportunity that history presents us with. We will place Guadalajara as a mecca of international academic tourism; we will do it defeating images of violence which some have used to characterize our country; we will achieve it with organization and adequate dissemination; with seri-

ousness and punctuality; showing the world the beauties that Jalisco and its capital has, and with our human warmth and traditional hospitality.

Ours is a serious ophthalmology, modern and organized, and this shall be reflected in the scientific program. Our wealth is in our traditions and in the undeniable strength of youth which manifests itself periodically in various international forums. Mexican ophthalmology must gravitate in world ophthalmology and therefore we must put forth our best effort.

This is for Mexico and for the Mexican Society of Ophthalmology!

#### **Organizing Committee**

*World Ophthalmology Congress WOC2016*

**Enrique Graue-Wiechers, MD**  
*President WOC2016*

**Rafael Sánchez-Fontán, MD**  
*Vice President, WOC2016*

## **References**

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