

IPSF WORLD CONGRESS 2007

The International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation holds a congress every year and Jared Ching was able to attend as a result of winning the Reckitt Benckiser "Pharmacy student of the year" award. He discusses the congress held in Taiwan

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Michael Kar Sin, BPSA student exchange officer and a third-year student at the London School of Pharmacy, and Jared Ching receive the UK flag from Audrey Clarissa, former president of the IPSF, at the opening ceremony of the 2007 IPSF conference

Allen Wu

As last year's winner of the Reckitt Benckiser "Pharmacy student of the year" award, I was granted an all-expenses-paid trip to the International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation World Congress in Taiwan in August 2007. I represented the UK as an official delegate. The aim of the congress was to discuss and exchange ideas about pharmacy education and relevant current affairs around the world. The experience was both rewarding and educational. I was able to promote and compare our system of pharmacy on an international basis.

The opening ceremony was at the five star Grand Hotel in Kaohsiung — Taiwan's biggest industrial city. We were welcomed by the president of the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP), Kamal Midha. He emphasised that the profession of pharmacy is moving from a product-oriented to a more patient-oriented profession. The theme selected for the 53rd congress was pharmacoeconomics. The two-day event included presentations from guest speakers from the US, Indonesia and Taiwan, who raised awareness on issues related to economics and resources in pharmacy.

I was able to talk in a "Lifelong learning workshop" about continuing professional development (CPD). It was clear that other countries do not have a parallel system in place to ensure that pharmacists update their knowledge and skills continually. Delegates from other countries, particularly Sweden and Finland, highlighted that the onus was on the individual pharmacist to take the initiative. I pointed out that in Britain the Royal Pharmaceutical Society intends to make CPD a compulsory exercise for every registered pharmacist. This contrasted greatly with international systems and, following

discussions, it was clear that taking this step would be beneficial for all countries.

A general assembly provided member countries with opportunities to voice their opinions on motions and activities that the IPSF should pursue. Variation in opinion among countries became apparent as topics such as availability of learning resources or establishment of pharmacy as an important profession created debate. As IPSF is a non-governmental, non-religious and non-political organisation, a call to vote provided a diplomatic solution to discussions that went beyond the available time frame. Providing a perspective from the UK allowed me to appreciate how advanced our system is, particularly regarding the innovative and evolving roles of the pharmacist, eg, independent prescribing.

The "Patient counselling" event is traditional at the IPSF, dating back to 1989. It aims to foster effective pharmacist-patient interaction in a competitive environment. Taking part in the advanced category, I was able to practise my counselling skills with a difficult "patient", played by an actor. The message this event carried was clear: patient interaction is an important skill requiring practice and attention to develop the level of professionalism that the public expects.

Exchanging knowledge and interacting with international pharmacy students at the IPSF was both enjoyable and informative. I highly recommend attendance at the international meetings of both the IPSF and FIP. It encourages future pharmacists to take an active role in their professional development and provides a rich source of inspiration through meeting enthusiastic colleagues from around the world. ■



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