





# SASOM News:

## Report on the ICOH Midterm Meeting:

### Firenze, Italy, 13 – 15 March 2017



**SASOM**  
South African Society  
of Occupational Medicine  
1967-2017



**Group photograph of the participants of the ICOH Midterm Meeting, taken in the gardens of the meeting venue, Villa Tornabuoni Lemmi** Photo: ICOH

**All photos courtesy of Claudina Nogueira, unless otherwise stated.**

**A.** The meeting venue Villa Tornabuoni Lemmi, an impressive example of Renaissance architecture, is one of INAIL's training centres which also hosts cultural events

**B.** The International Conference on Active Ageing, a side event of the ICOH Midterm Meeting, was held at the Palazzo Vecchio, in the impressive Salone dei Cinquecento (Hall of Five Hundred), amidst a magnificent setting of art masterpieces, from floor to ceiling

**C.** The emblem of Firenze since the 11th century has been a red lily (fleur de lis), and this symbol is prominently and proudly displayed across the city, from buildings to lamp posts

**D.** Forever Young – Seen and heard at the Active Ageing Conference (L to R) Ms Claudina Nogueira (ICOH Board and SASOM ExCo member); Prof Mary Ross (Chair of the ICOH WG Occupational Infectious Agents and SASOM ExCo member); Dr Marilyn Fingerhut (ICOH Vice President for SCs); and Dr Leslie Nickels (Chair of the ICOH SC on History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases)

**E.** Work on Firenze's spectacular cathedral, 'Il Duomo', started in the 13th century. The famous dome was built in the 15th century, but the cathedral in its entirety was not completed until the 19th century, six centuries after construction began

**F.** Street art (literally) at dusk in the historic centre of Firenze

**G.** The most romantic and unconventional way to experience Firenze... a horse-drawn carriage ride.

**H.** Botticelli's masterpiece 'The Birth of Venus' is housed in the Uffizi Gallery

**I.** One of the most important Italian museums, the Uffizi Gallery is also one of the largest and best known in the world, and holds a collection of priceless works from the Renaissance period

**J.** A view of the Florentine historic centre, from the other side of the River Arno, beyond the South bank, also known as 'Oltrarno'. Il Duomo and the Giotto Bell Tower are the prominent landmarks on the left, and the Basilica di Santa Croce (Basilica of the Holy Cross) on the right in the foreground, houses the tombs of Michelangelo and Galileo, among others.

**F**ounded in 1906 in Milan as the Permanent Commission on Occupational Health, today the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) is the world's leading international scientific society in the field of occupational health, with a membership of 2000 professionals from 93 countries. ICOH's main objective is to foster the scientific progress, knowledge and development of occupational health and safety in all its aspects. The flagship of the ICOH activities is the triennial World Congress on Occupational Health, usually attended by approximately 3000 participants. ICOH has 37 Scientific Committees (SCs) and four Working Groups (WGs), most of which hold their own symposia, conferences and workshops; produce scientific monographs; and review the abstracts that are submitted to the International Congresses. Midterm meetings are held in the periods between the ICOH Congresses, and these are attended by the ICOH Officers, Board members, and the Chairs of the SCs and WGs, with the aim of discussing the ongoing activities of ICOH, and the progress made in terms of the ICOH workplan for the specific triennium.

The ICOH Midterm Meeting for the current triennium (2015-2018) was held in Firenze (Florence), Italy, from 13 to 15 March 2017.



**The Galleria dell' Accademia was purpose-built to house one of the greatest masterpieces of the Renaissance: Michelangelo's David. Carved from a single block of marble, Michelangelo's most famous work was challenging to complete, but when the magnificent marble statue of David first emerged in 1504, it was immediately adopted by the Florentines as the ultimate emblem of power, liberty and civic pride.**

### **An invitation to Firenze**

The city of Firenze, capital of the region of Tuscany with a population of around 400 000, lies on the banks of the River Arno in a valley surrounded by hills. Its industry and craft businesses, commercial and cultural links, and the world's greatest repository of Renaissance art, make it a lively city of mesmerising historical value, steeped in charm, splendour and artistic inspiration. The history of the city of Firenze dates back to the first century BC, when it was founded by the Romans, who called it 'Florentia'. The emblem of Firenze is a red lily, the representation of which is derived from the Florentine iris, a white flower that was very common in the local area.

In the 15th century, Firenze came under the influence of the Medici family, who subsequently became the Grand Dukes of Tuscany until the 18th century. This period, known as the Renaissance, marked the peak of the city's cultural, artistic, political and economic grandeur.

Firenze has an exceptional artistic heritage that bears testimony to its centuries-old civilisation. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), nearly a third of the world's art treasures reside in Firenze. Figures crucial for western art were born in and around the city – artists like Giotto, Donatello, Botticelli, and the universal geniuses, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. Their masterpieces, together with those of generations of artists right up to the 20th century, can be found in the city's many museums, the most famous being the Uffizi, one of the finest art galleries in the world, which exhibits Botticelli's 'The Birth of Venus' and da Vinci's 'Annunciation'. The Galleria dell' Accademia houses one of the Renaissance's most magnificent masterpieces: Michelangelo's marble sculpture of 'David'.

The city has a number of celebrated monuments, marking the various phases of Firenze's rich artistic history: the Baptistry with its mosaics; the iconic cathedral 'Il Duomo', officially called Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore (Basilica of Saint Mary of the Flower) which took approximately 140 years to build (but six centuries to complete in its entirety, including the exterior façade of polychrome marble panels) is a majestic example of Gothic architecture topped by Brunelleschi's terracotta-tiled dome, with an adjacent bell tower by Giotto; medieval churches decorated with fresco cycles; and public and private palaces like the stately Palazzo Vecchio (the Old Palace – the civic centre of Firenze, dating back to 1300) and Palazzo Pitti. Many artistic treasures can also be found in the city's many places of worship and, in fact, Firenze is traditionally divided into four quarters, named after the most important churches: Santa Maria Novella, San Giovanni and Santa Croce, all north of the River Arno; and Santo Spirito, south of the river.

There has been a university in Firenze since medieval times and today it has numerous specialist institutes. Celebrated writers like Petrarch and Boccaccio and the



renowned poet, Dante Alighieri, were born or worked in the city. They were the first to use a language other than Latin, namely Tuscan, which eventually became the recognised Italian language. This was the beginning of the end of Latin being used as the common language throughout Europe. The legacy of Firenze is also reflected in the many museums of scientific interest, such as the Museum of the History of Science, and the university's Natural History Museum.

In 1339, Firenze became the first city in Italy, in fact all of Europe, to have paved streets, before Rome, Milan and Venice.

Firenze was severely damaged during World War II by the Germans who blew up all its bridges except for the iconic Ponte Vecchio (the Old Bridge), which dates back to 1345 and has twinkled with the glittering wares of jewellers and goldsmiths ever since the 16th century.

Firenze has had two floods, both on November 4th, in the years 1333 and 1966. After torrential rainfall in November 1966, the River Arno rose more than five metres. In two days, 35 people were killed and hundreds left homeless as the city and many of its treasures were engulfed by silt, sewerage and water. 'Mud Angels' as they came to be known, flew in from around the world to help with the immense clean-up and restoration processes.

Last but not least, let's not forget that it is not just painters, sculptors, and inventors that Firenze has produced. In fact, the mother of modern nursing was born here as well: Florence Nightingale, 'the Lady of the Lamp', appropriately named after the city of her birth, was born in Firenze in 1820 while her parents were on a 'grand tour' of Europe.

### **INAIL hosts the ICOH Midterm Meeting**

The ICOH Midterm Meeting was organised and hosted by the Italian Workers' Compensation Authority (*INAIL – Istituto Nazionale Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul Lavoro*) which houses the ICOH Secretariat.

INAIL is a government entity whose main objective is to safeguard workers against physical injuries and occupational diseases. INAIL is responsible for research in the fields of work accident prevention, safety at workplaces, and health in the living and working environment. In the light of recent legislative changes, worker protection has increasingly taken on the characteristics of an integrated system of protection, ranging from preventive actions at the workplace to medical services and financial assistance; to rehabilitation and re-integration of victims of workplace accidents or professional diseases to social life and work. Other INAIL initiatives include the continuous monitoring of employment and injury trends, training and advice to small and medium-sized enterprises in the field of prevention, and funding of companies that invest in social security.

The meeting venue was the beautiful and historic residence of Villa Tornabuoni Lemmi. An impressive example of Renaissance architecture dating back to the 14th century,

the villa was acquired by INAIL in 1954 and has undergone restoration over a number of years. On the surrounding agricultural land, INAIL built a hospital complex (the Casualty and Orthopaedic Centre in Careggi), turning the villa into a scientific and cultural point of reference as the villa is now one of INAIL's training centres which also hosts cultural events.

### **Nuts and bolts**

Four members of the South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) participated in the ICOH Midterm Meeting: three South Africans, viz. Prof. Mary Ross, Chair of the Working Group on Occupational Infectious Agents (WGOIA); Ms Claudina Nogueira, ICOH Board member and Secretary of the WGOIA; Dr Murray Coombs, Chair of the SC on Occupational Health in the Chemical Industry (MEDICHEM); and one Zimbabwean, Dr Dingani Moyo, ICOH Board member.

### **Day One**

The Midterm Meeting started with the Joint Meeting of the ICOH Officers, Board and SCs, on Monday 13 March. The joint meeting opened with the report from the ICOH President, Dr Jukka Takala, and was followed by the report on the SCs (presented by Dr Marilyn Fingerhut, ICOH Vice President); the report on the activities of the National Secretaries (presented by Prof. Seong-Kyu Kang, ICOH Vice President); and the report by the Secretary General, Prof. Sergio Iavicoli. The meeting participants then broke up into groups for discussion and subsequent feedback on three topics, viz. i) integration and collaboration among SCs; ii) outputs from SCs; and iii) continuity and resource management for SCs.

### **Integration and collaboration among Scientific Committees**

The session on integration and collaboration among more than 30 SCs of ICOH is pertinent to our local associations, organisations and institutions in terms of unifying efforts to improve occupational health in southern Africa. The session, co-chaired by SASOM member, Prof. Mary Ross, and ICOH Board member, Dr Elia Enriquez (Mexico), explored the necessity and challenges for integration and collaboration; the participants concluded that it is difficult to maintain so many SCs, but it is also difficult to completely abolish a SC. For example, the integrated Rural Health SC retains components of its original three committees.

SASOM member and Chair of MEDICHEM, one of the largest SCs, Dr Murray Coombs, outlined the importance of creating a taxonomy of SCs and WGs to recognise logical opportunities to integrate and to identify collaboration to produce maximum productivity and reduce overlap. This would create an overall context and organisation for the SCs and assist in defining the scope of each in a hierarchy for which membership size and expertise could be used to define categories.

Language barriers were also identified as a challenge for



collaboration and universal access of all members to scientific products and information, as was the need for ICOH to have a general framework and service to update webpages and maintain higher visibility, like the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) websites.

Suggestions for changing the operation of SCs and making them more relevant to members included establishing an overall vision of what is wanted, and involving National Secretaries in promoting their use, converting smaller committees to expert groups, and making them available for members to consult on specific



**The Active Ageing Conference was held at the Palazzo Vecchio, the fortress palace which was the hub of political life in medieval Firenze, and once home to the Medicis. Today, it is the civic centre, a museum, and a repository of Renaissance art. A replica of Michelangelo's marble statue of David (bottom right) presides over one of Firenze's most famous squares: Piazza della Signoria.**

issues. A need was identified for ICOH training materials and also for all ICOH SC members to include that affiliation on peer reviewed publications since a vital output for ICOH should be position papers and reviews on important issues. Other ideas included holding summer schools and pre- and post-conference workshops; raising resources for self-sustaining activities, including updating training material; and providing regular updates for members in the ICOH newsletter. All South African members of ICOH are encouraged to give input on their expectations and suggestions to SASOM for Dr Adriaan Combrinck, the National Secretary, or Ms Claudina Nogueira, Board member, to convey to ICOH.

The 45th International MEDICHEM Conference will take place in Vienna, Austria, 13 to 15 September 2017, with the theme 'Occupational Carcinogens'. For more information, please access the conference website: <http://medichem2017.eu>

### **Outputs from Scientific Committees**

Fourteen participants, representing approximately eight SCs and four current/former ICOH Board members attended this session which was co-chaired by SASOM member and ICOH Board member, Ms Claudina Nogueira, and Dr Leslie Nickels (USA), Chair of the SC on History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases.

During introductions, each participant was asked to: a) discuss an experience in publishing with ICOH, if applicable; b) give their impressions on what role they see ICOH playing in publications; and c) provide input on what a potential ICOH Publications WG should consider.

There was general consensus from participants that ICOH Leadership should publish statements and position papers, and that the ICOH SCs and WGs should publish practical materials (booklets, brochures, factsheets, guidelines) as well as meeting reports and proceedings. It was further agreed that acknowledging ICOH in external publications is appropriate and encouraged; it is important for ICOH to have practical outputs and tools; and it is equally important for ICOH Leadership to make statements on 'hot topics' and to highlight emerging issues. It was felt that these outputs could be achieved much more readily if an official ICOH publication process could be developed and implemented.

SCs have jurisdiction to publish on their own websites, and should take full advantage of this platform to communicate about their work, to ICOH Leadership and members alike. This would potentially also facilitate collaboration opportunities between SCs. Additionally, SCs should publish their outputs in peer-reviewed articles and proceedings (in line with requirements of particular journals).

There is a need to define and establish a process (step-by-step guide) for publishing an ICOH document. The process should include the following:

- Define publication types as each has a specific



requirement and format, e.g. statement, position paper, guideline, factsheet, practical tool, etc.

- Once types are defined, a simple guideline should be developed for creating each publication type, as well as a check-list or flow diagram to follow
- Distinction should be made between ICOH publications and ICOH SC publications
- Booklets and other materials published through ICOH are the ideal outputs to acknowledge ICOH expertise and should include the endorsement of ICOH
- There should be a standard way of acknowledging ICOH in any external publication (which will also serve the purpose of marketing ICOH and publicising the ICOH brand)
- ICOH should review what other organisations have in place as their publication processes, and adapt what could be useful for inclusion in the ICOH publication guideline

### **Continuity and resource management for Scientific Committees**

This session was co-chaired by ICOH Board member, Prof. Malcolm Sim (Australia), and Mr Mahinda Seneviratne (India), Chair of the SC on Small Scale Enterprises and the Informal Sector. Participants discussed the challenges faced by ICOH in terms of limited financial resources and sponsorships, and the costs incurred by the activities of ICOH SCs. Recommendations were made in terms of resource management, including better use of social media platforms; translation of training materials developed by SCs into more languages; development of links with journals; mentoring of and building capacity for researchers; and marketing of the benefits of ICOH and SC memberships.

Following the report-back from the three breakout discussion sessions, Dr Marilyn Fingerhut led a discussion on enhancing the future of the ICOH SCs. Dr Fingerhut gave a brief overview of progress made in terms of the scientific programme for the upcoming 32nd ICOH Congress in Dublin, Ireland, from 29 April to 4 May 2018 (ICOH2018 Congress), highlighting the fact that there were 85 Special Sessions that had been requested across all SCs and WGs. Additionally, the ICOH2018 Congress will continue the special focus on student poster presentations that was pioneered at the ICOH2009 Congress in Cape Town, and has been a fixture at all subsequent congresses. A sweetener for the ICOH2018 Congress student poster competition is the fact that three additional prize categories have been introduced by the congress organisers, over and above the already known prizes of first, second and third place winners, and five runners-up.

Day One wrapped up with the final session being dedicated to the ICOH2018 Congress, with Prof. Ken Addley, Chair of the National Scientific Committee of the congress, presenting a comprehensive overview on organisational

aspects of the event, progress to date, and what participants can expect for ICOH2018, where a total of approximately 160 sessions (special sessions, free paper sessions, workshops) have already been scheduled over and above the 10 keynote and 32 semi-plenary presentations. Dr Addley concluded his presentation by thanking Dr Martin Hogan, ICOH Board member and President of ICOH2018, for his ongoing support and commitment to ensuring the success of the upcoming congress.

The day ended with the official ICOH Midterm Meeting social event: a cultural evening which started with a concert with performances by the School of Music of Fiseole – *Schola cantorum 'Francesco Landini'* – choir and musicians, who delighted the meeting participants with a rich programme that included the rendition of well-known compositions by Franz Schubert and Robert Schumann, followed by a scrumptious dinner of delectable Tuscan cuisine to tantalise the taste buds.

### **Day Two**

#### **International Conference on 'Active Ageing: from research to action oriented policies'**

The International Conference on 'Active Ageing: from research to action oriented policies' was held on Tuesday morning, 14 March, against the impressive setting of the Salone dei Cinquecento (Hall of Five Hundred), arguably the most imposing chamber of the Palazzo Vecchio, 53 metres long and 22 metres wide, with swirling battle scenes painted from floor to ceiling, by Vasari and his apprentices.

The conference aimed to address the problems related to active ageing of the working population and was jointly organised by INAIL and ICOH, in collaboration with the Municipality of Firenze, and under the patronage of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, as a side event of the ICOH Midterm Meeting.

The event was opened by the Mayor of Firenze, Dario

#### **ICOH2018 CONGRESS**

*'Occupational Health and Wellbeing:  
Linking Research to Practice'*

#### **IMPORTANT DATES**

*Abstract submission deadline:*  
extended to 14 July 2017

*Early Bird registration deadline:*  
15 November 2017

*Deadline for presenter registration and confirmation of attendance:* 8 December 2017

*Mid registration deadline:*  
25 January 2018

For more information and to register for the conference visit: [www.icoh2018.org](http://www.icoh2018.org)

Nardella, and attended by approximately 350 participants. The programme consisted of presentations by prominent speakers from Europe who stimulated a very productive and high-level discussion on how to link current knowledge to efficiently designing and developing increasingly effective sector policies.

In his keynote address on 'Sustainable work and healthy ageing at work: a key goal for Europe', Michel Servoz, the Director General for Employment Affairs for the European Commission, noted that 30% of the working population was over the age of 55 years and that skills training for older workers is a challenge because of perceptions of inflexibility, expense, and lack of skills in this sector of the working population.

Christa Sedlatschek, Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), commented on the 28 different occupational health and safety systems in Europe and the fact that 21% of the working population suffers from long term illnesses or health problems in addition to the increase with age of total average time spent on sick leave. Many companies were approaching the challenges of the ageing workforce through a life course approach with workplace health promotion and age management, such as

making use of flexible working options and job rotation. Paul Schulte, the Director of the Education and Information Division of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, USA), emphasised the concept of productive ageing to combat the rising dependency ratio of the aged, and to cater for the cognitive abilities versus work experience across a working lifespan. He stressed the need to develop and evaluate interventions for an age-friendly workplace. The conference was concluded with a stimulating presentation by Roberto Cingolani from the Italian Institute of Technology on the future role of robots to aid the older worker in the workplace.

### **First ICOH Board Meeting**

The first ICOH Board meeting was held at Villa Tornabuoni Lemmi in the afternoon, and followed the conference. The ICOH President opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. The minutes of the previous ICOH Board Meeting, held at the ICOH2015 Congress in Seoul, were approved.

The programme for the afternoon started with reports by the Task Groups on Membership (including a discussion on a fee proposal for collective members) and Information



**ICOH Officers, Board members and Chairs of SCs and WGs in attendance at the ICOH Midterm Meetings**



and Communication (with a focus on communication tools available to ICOH, including website, newsletter and social media platforms, and how to best leverage these offerings), and the Ethics and Transparency Committee (reporting on the activities carried out to date in the current triennium to disseminate and implement the third edition of the ICOH Code of Ethics for Occupational Health Professionals).

In terms of membership, it is interesting to note that, although membership from South Africa increased for the ICOH2009 and ICOH2012 Congresses in Cape Town and Cancun, respectively, it has tapered off subsequently. Currently, the countries with the most ICOH members are Italy, Peru and Japan. South African occupational health and safety professionals are reminded of the benefits of belonging to ICOH, and the very reasonable membership fees for developing countries: in the case of South Africa, the triennial membership fee is 72 Swiss Francs (equivalent to approximately ZAR 980), and only 45 Swiss Francs (ZAR 612) for members younger than 34 years. For practitioners who become members now, the latter part of the current triennium, the membership fee will be a third of the total fee, and they will be afforded the benefits of membership, such as a reduction in the registration fees for the ICOH2018 Congress. Please access the ICOH website for more information: [www.icohweb.org](http://www.icohweb.org)

Prof. Malcolm Sim, ICOH Board Member and President of the ICOH2021 Congress, gave a presentation on what is under development for the next congress, to be held in Melbourne, Australia, from 21 to 26 March 2021. The theme of the congress is 'Sharing solutions in Occupational Health: Locally, Regionally, Globally', and the hosting organisation is the Australian and New Zealand Society of Occupational Medicine (ANZSOM).

In the last session of the day, the following ICOH WG reports were presented and updates on the activities and achievements of the current triennium were given: Occupational Infectious Agents (presented by the WGOIA Chair, Prof. Mary Ross); Young Workers and Child Labour; Implementation of the Global Strategy of Occupational Health for All, with special reference to the global ban of asbestos; Participatory Approaches in Occupational Health; and Occupational Cancer.

The WGOIA took the opportunity of holding a Business Meeting in the evening, as six of its members attended the ICOH Midterm Meeting in their capacities of Board members and/or Chairs of SCs and WGs. A report on the mandate and activities of the WGOIA, and the main outcomes of the Business Meeting, will be published in a future issue of *Occupational Health Southern Africa*.

### **Day Three** **Second ICOH Board Meeting**

The following reports were presented on the third and last day: ICOH Finance Committee; ICOH Budget; and Task Group on Constitution, and Bye Laws and Guidelines. These

presentations were followed by a session dedicated to election procedures for the 2018-2020 triennium, with the opening of the call for nominations for the election of ICOH Officers and members of the Board having been announced for 29 April 2017. The Board agreed with the proposal to amend the ICOH Constitution to enable the introduction of the electronic vote, starting with the 2021-2024 triennium. This is a new development for ICOH which has always had a system of paper ballots for the election procedure. The proposed amendments will be submitted for approval to the General Assembly in Dublin at the ICOH2018 Congress.

The remainder of the meeting time was dedicated to discussions on the following topics: relationships between ICOH and the international organisations, ILO and WHO, as well as NGOs; a proposal for the appointment of ICOH Honorary members; and the current ICOH strategy and future developments.

The meeting adjourned at noon, with the ICOH President thanking all attendees for their valuable contributions and active participation during the three days. A special vote of thanks and appreciation was extended to the ICOH Secretariat staff for their tireless work in organising the ICOH Midterm Meeting, and their support and able assistance to the ICOH Officers, Board members and Chairs of the SCs and WGs leading up to and during the meeting.

### **SASOM Programme 2017** **SASOM 2017 Annual Congress**

SASOM will hold its Annual Congress on 9 and 10 June 2017, at the Protea Hotel by Marriott, OR Tambo International Airport, Kempton Park, Gauteng. The theme of the Congress is 'Challenges in Occupational Health: Doing right, at the right time'. The Congress will host the Meeting of the ICOH Regional (African) National Secretaries. A report on the SASOM Congress will be published in the next issue of *Occupational Health Southern Africa*.

### **SASOM 2017 Annual General Meeting**

The KwaZulu-Natal branch of SASOM will host the SASOM Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday 25 November 2017; venue to be advised.

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