

IN CONVERSATION WITH BRIAN WESTERBERG

We caught up with **Brian Westerberg**, President of IFOS 2021, to find out more about the upcoming congress taking place in Vancouver 19-23 June 2021.



Tell us about the innovations you are hoping to bring to IFOS in Vancouver.

If the meeting in Vancouver is the same as any other meeting but just in a different venue, we will be disappointed.

We will build on the green theme we promoted during our bid: the Vancouver Convention Centre is Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) platinum certified; utensils, cutlery and cups will all be compostable; minimal material will be published, instead we will use electronic means of disseminating information whenever possible; plenary speakers with a passion for changing our path towards global climate change will be solicited; if possible, guest speakers may be linked in by videoconference to minimise environmental impact of travel; and exhibitors will be challenged to compete for the greenest booth prize.

The theme of 'Globalisation' will be pervasive in the meeting: the connecting of individuals from around the world with each other; sharing of technological advances in patient care from one part of the world so all may benefit; improving access to care and challenging international companies to help in this goal.

There are many controversies in our profession and in our specialty. We will use debate formats to explore these controversies in an engaging format, probably utilising the exhibitor space in the convention centre and perhaps soliciting opinions from our industry partners.

Have you fixed any keynote speakers?

We are currently identifying themes that are relevant to practising otolaryngologists, who are surgeons but who are also professionals and members of society. The topics will not all be ENT-specific, but rather more general in nature and highly relevant to us, who we are and what we do.

For instance, general topics identified include: the role of artificial intelligence in society today and how it will impact healthcare; climate change and how we are going to change it; indigenous people's position in countries around the world; the role of scientific journalists in improving access and quality of healthcare.

How will you be integrating the various national ENT bodies from around the world?

The official language of the conference will be English. However, there likely will be sessions in French as well as Spanish, perhaps given by the same speakers in English in a different section of the programme if they are fluent in both languages.

You are hosting the congress in one of the most attractive cities in the world - what is planned for the extra-curricular activities?

First and foremost, Vancouver is a fantastic city to explore with your family. We strongly encourage attendees to bring their family and stay for a few days before or after the meeting to enjoy the city and everything it has to offer.

Activities available include cycling in Stanley Park, walking/running the seawall, Grouse Grind/skytram to Grouse Mountain, Capilano suspension bridge/skywalk, kayaking in English Bay, whale watching and wildlife viewing.

For those more adventurous and wanting to explore nature, there are many opportunities within a few hours of Vancouver: cruise ships depart from Vancouver passing through to Alaska up the Inside Passage; fishing; hiking to view wildlife; rocky mountaineer train through the Rocky Mountains, hiking in and around Whistler mountain.



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