

President's Insights September 2022

Dr. Dan Twelker, VOSH/International Immediate Past President, Dr. Tracy Matchinski, VOSH/International Past President, and I were honored to represent VOSH/International at the Fourth Pan American Optometric Congress held in Lima, Peru, the week of September 19th, 2022. Before I speak about the congress itself, I would like to mention a few insights on Lima. The food is, simply put, amazing. I did not have one less-than-stellar meal, regardless of the price point of the restaurant. The combination of Asian, Indigenous, and European flavors added to the unique spices available in the region create a wealth of culinary delights; and that is without mentioning the pisco. For a large city, Lima feels very walkable and its people are friendly and approachable. The one thing that makes me hesitate about retiring there is the absolutely insane, hectic, and cacophonous traffic.

The congress was very well attended, with almost 500 registrants from the Americas and Europe. The seminars and workshops offered quality education on a wide range of academic and practical topics; from the future of optometry to pediatric optometry, neuro-optometry, the use of artificial intelligence, ocular surface disease, and specialty contacts. There was impressive feedback for both Dr. Matchinski, who presented on "How to prescribe technology aids to patients with different levels of visual incapacity", and Dr. Twelker for his "Guide to prescribing glasses for babies, infants, and toddlers". The quality of the education impressed even this harsh CE critic. Of course, the presentation and workshop on hybrid contact lenses were amongst the finest.

This congress also importantly celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Instituto de Educación Superior Eurohispano, the optometry program that was founded and is still directed, by Dr. Severo Sanchez. Dr. Sanchez is a quietly intelligent, kind person who is absolutely devoted to optometry, optometric education, and patient care. His pride in the institute and the work that they do was obvious when Dr. Matchinski and I toured the 5-level institute and optical. Dr. Sanchez leads a very active SVOSH chapter. Their significant community outreach work also sets them apart and is a reason for Dr. Sanchez receiving our 2021 Humanitarian of the Year Award.

Right before the congress, Dr. Sanchez and I attended a meeting with leaders of the National Institute of Ophthalmologists (INO) to reinforce the message of the value of different eye care professionals working together for the benefit of our patients. INO providers were invited and supported to attend the congress as a clear indicator of our interest to back the continuing education and exposure of local professionals to knowledge and connections.

While I was busy meeting with representatives of international universities attending the congress, Dr. Matchinski and Dr. Twelker visited our other Peruvian SVOSH chapter at the Universidad Nacional Federico Villarreal to run a low vision workshop, meet the leadership and students and donate low vision equipment for the school. In the same spirit of collaboration, we offered scholarships for talented students of both of our SVOSH chapters in Peru to attend the congress.

As a small organization, we do not have huge resources but we make every effort possible to share our expertise and ensure that our colleagues and the younger generations of optometrists in our SVOSH chapters benefit from it. Nurturing local talent and knowledge is a sure pathway to sustainability. I look forward to continuing work in support of Peruvian optometry.

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