

A FORUM FOR FUTURE LEADERS



in partnership with DIA



The Drug Information Association is celebrating its 50 year anniversary in 2014. It has achieved many things since 1964, but it is just as important to look to the future and what it can offer the new generation of industry professionals, says Jytte Lyngvig, DIA's European director.

In 2014, the Drug Information Association (DIA) will celebrate 50 years since its first meeting took place in 1964. This multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted forum, the first meeting of its kind, brought together key members of the drug development industry for conversation, learning and debate.

DIA was founded in 1964 by group of pharmaceutical scientist-executives as result of the 1962 Kefauver Harris Amendments to the US Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act of 1938. These amendments, a response to the thalidomide tragedy, created new standards for efficacy, safety and labeling and introduced new requirements for clinical trials. The founders saw the need for a neutral platform where regulators and industry could discuss how to interpret and implement these new evidence requirements.

In 1979, the late Thomas W Teal laid the groundwork from the first administrative office of DIA (his home) for what DIA would become: The global forum for knowledge exchange that fosters innovation to raise the level of health and well-being worldwide. Mr Teal served as DIA Executive Director from 1979 through 1991, and as Editor in Chief of the organization's flagship Drug Information Journal research publication from 1983 through 2001. This neutral forum has been credited with helping to harmonize international regulations, advance data standards, and facilitating the introduction of electronic submission of regulatory approval and marketing applications for medicinal products.

DIA has since evolved from a group of 30 professionals employed in academia and the pharmaceutical industry into a global, multidisciplinary association of nearly 18,000 members in more than 80 countries.

DIA provides invaluable forums to exchange vital information and discuss current issues related to health products, technologies, and services; it delivers customized learning experiences; it builds, maintains, and facilitates trusted relationships with and among individuals and organizations



that drive and share DIA values and mandates; and importantly, it still offers a multidisciplinary neutral environment, which is respected globally for its integrity and relevance.

A SAFE PLACE

The secret to DIA's success is the unique idea of gathering all stakeholders around a table on neutral ground, says Jytte Lyngvig, DIA's European director and ex-executive director of the Danish Medicines Agency. "I am completely convinced that 50 years ago this idea of gathering everyone on neutral ground would have been really revolutionary," she says. Even today, this idea maintains its power: A recent conference in Oman for stakeholders in the Middle East and African pharmaceutical market was a great success, she recalls, because of the neutrality and diversity that DIA can offer to discussants.

Dr Lyngvig uses a historical analogy to describe the way in which people from different backgrounds can work together if they put their organisational bias aside. She recalls images of medieval churches where those entering were asked to leave their weapons at the door: "Of course people have different positions, and rightly so, but if they're not able to meet without 'weapons' they will never be able to find solutions."

To help create the leaders of the future, it is fundamental that the DIA's own leadership team is representative of the global pharmaceutical industry. Dr Lyngvig describes the cultural, national and linguistic diversity of the DIA leadership team as being "most important" because it represents DIA's mission and what DIA wants to achieve through its educational and networking events and forums.

But it is not just the neutrality and global nature of DIA that has helped it become such an important forum for future leaders in clinical research, therapeutic product development and healthcare systems. The discussions held at DIA lead to action. In particular, innovation in the clinical trials arena can be linked to discussions held at DIA, says Dr Lyngvig. "There are many different approaches to innovation throughout the world, and it is an ongoing discussion. The focus on clinical trials has been very high on the agenda at DIA," she explains.

In fact, the Clinical Data Interchange Standards Consortium (CDISC), a non-profit organization that has established standards to acquire exchange and archive clinical research data, grew out of DIA meetings. "Because there are people among our communities and among our members and volunteers that are

working with clinical trials in their daily lives, talking through ideas in this neutral forum is the best way to find solutions,” says Dr Lyngvig. It is groups such as this that have led to the creation of reference models, including those for trial master files.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

It is important to recognize the everyday business needs of today’s health care products professionals; based on this insight DIA has developed a commanding new membership package to better serve its members. One of the paths being pursued to implement this approach is to partner with relevant third parties, offering affiliate benefits or discounts, as well as exploring opportunities within the core of the membership experience related to content, networking and professional development.

It is an important strategy to DIA’s leadership team that it ensures the ways of learning offered through DIA are kept as relevant to a modern working environment as possible. Although DIA membership gives individual access to an exclusive network of likeminded professionals in person, it is also through the organization’s increasing online environment that members can connect and exchange experience through virtual communities and a dedicated networking platform. The ability to give its members the choice of learning and networking environment is an important strategy for the DIA’s leadership team, says Dr Lyngvig. “It is so tough to take time away from your day job so we have to make the DIA program attractive. There are so many choices.”

Career development, for example, is one platform that DIA offers its members. Networking and learning in person can often be more effective than remote or distance learning; however, the current quite challenging economic environment means that travel and time spent out of the office isn’t as easy to justify as it was previously. This provides DIA with the opportunity to evolve the way it reaches and connects to its members, especially younger industry professionals. “This adds an extra challenge for us as organizers because we have to assess what is more useful: Face-to-face, or using the web for things such as live streaming, video streaming, and what we can use eLearning for. It’s the same as online dating – I don’t think people get married without having met each other first,” says Dr Lyngvig.

DIA has long recognized that students and young professionals are the future of therapeutic product development through Student and Young Professionals programs developed to engage with these key

stakeholders as they embark upon their careers. For its annual, regional flagship meetings, as the EuroMeeting, DIA has established a Fellowship Program which supports a significant number of students, young professionals and patients to attend these events and helps them make the most of what DIA has to offer by organizing specific guidance sessions and tutorials. These important groups also have access to DIA resources through student or patient memberships.

Furthermore, DIA is aware that patients and patient organizations have been becoming increasingly involved in drug development, and now offers one of the most sought after forums where patients and their representatives can directly connect with regulators and drug development professionals from all areas of expertise. In Europe DIA is directly involved in the EUPATI (European Patient’s Academy on Therapeutic Innovation) project, that will increase the capacity of patients taking a direct part in drug development.

“There is a lot of pressure on young professionals to excel in their careers but also in a lot of cases to look after their families,” says Dr Lyngvig. “They are the future, and therefore we have to have them as part of the discussion and the dialogue. We have brilliant younger people as speakers and session chairs and we make sure they are supported as much as possible. But we also have to challenge their managers – whether they are in industry, regulatory or academia – to let them go and have this unique networking opportunity and contact with their peers.”

2014 AND BEYOND

The next large networking event in the DIA Europe calendar is the *26th Annual EuroMeeting 2014* in Vienna, to be held 25-27 March. Dr Lyngvig describes plans for an “advanced program of interesting discussions of health citizenship and co-productions on health.”

“We’re trying to look a little into the future at the societal health agenda; in Europe, it is high on the agenda and we talk a lot in Europe about expenditures, democracy, and lack of innovation. This will be linked to what you and I expect from our health system and our health providers,” she says.

These discussions will help the organization step forward into the European health agenda of the future, she says. 2014 also marks the 50 year celebration of DIA’s global flagship offering, the DIA 50th Annual Meeting, next year in San Diego (CA). “These celebrations are good to look at, but it is not interesting unless we are also able to look into

the future,” says Dr Lyngvig. “It’s nice that the last 50 years were wonderful but we have to collectively turn our backs to them and ask what we can bring into the future.” Indeed, the theme for the *DIA 50th Annual Meeting is Celebrate the Past – Invent the Future*.

DIA is not only readying its members for the future global healthcare system in which they will be operating with focus on issues linked to development and use of all kind of medicinal products, drugs, devices, diagnostics, etc, it is also readying itself for a more globalized membership base. DIA has always been multi-disciplinary and multi-faceted, still an essential, core element of the organization. Large annual meetings, which Dr Lyngvig likens to a shopping mall, where you can meet all of the right people in the same place regardless of specialty, are just one part of what it offers to its members. Specific training courses and workshops that provide deeper technical detail offer variety in the way information is shared among DIA members.

The increasingly international nature of the organization – and of the pharmaceutical industry in general – is reflected in the way DIA makes use of digitalization and eLearning, without losing the “very important” element of face-to-face meetings. In late 2013, the DIA Board of Directors divided the organization into three larger regions – Americas, EMEA and Asia – to enable members to be part of a regional, rather than country-led, network.

It is fundamental to associations such as DIA that training courses and other forms of knowledge transfer are appropriately developed for these larger regional hubs. “The world changes very quickly, and so even though we have an overarching strategy we also have to be able to move quickly,” says Dr Lyngvig.

DIA members will receive a 20% discount to new Scrip subscriptions. Contact membership@diaeurope.org for more information.

Join DIA now!

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