



Congress Report-back

2nd International Health Tourism Congress - Turkey Antalya, 27 February – 2 March, 2009

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Executive Summary / Press Release

The “2nd International Health Tourism Congress – Turkey” was held in Antalya between 27 February – 2 March, 2009.

It was organized by the “Association of Improving Health Tourism”.

The primary objective of the Congress was to obtain knowledge from international and national Health Tourism experts and industry *insiders* and spread this to the domain stakeholders.

The additional aim was to highlight some of Turkey's Health Tourism “offerings” (providers and facilities).

250 participants (including 60 from outside Turkey, representing 25 countries) attended the event.

Besides the *Invited and Hosted* speakers from 8 countries, the Association also hosted several industry insiders and journalists from countries in the Middle East and the Balkan region.

The Opening Ceremony was attended by several national dignitaries, including:

- The Minister of Culture and Tourism
- The Ministry of Health Under-Secretary
- The Mayor of Antalya

The Opening Ceremony Introductory Speech was delivered by Dr. Dursun Aydın (President of the “Association of Improving Health Tourism”).

The Conference Program *Keynote Presentation* was delivered by Dr. Constantine Constantinides.

The Conference Program covered 6 broad Topics:

- A general view and overview of Health Tourism
- Quality and Standardization
- The Global Financial Crisis and its Effect on Health Tourism
- Health Tourism Marketing and Promotion
- Health Tourism Destinations, Provider Organizations and Medical Tourism Facilitation
- Spa and Thermalism

In all, there were 28 presentations and 11 mini-workshops.

It needs to be pointed out that the “Association of Improving Health Tourism” is committed to supporting and promoting the *ht8* approach to Integration, Development and Promotion of Health Tourism.

ht8 refers to the 8 Health Tourism Segments:

- Medical Tourism
- Dental Tourism
- Spa (and Thalassotherapy) Tourism
- Wellness and Fitness Tourism
- Sports Tourism
- Culinary Tourism
- Accessible Tourism
- Assisted Residential Tourism

ht8 is a concept introduced in 2008 by healthCare cybernetics (an international Health Tourism Sector *think and do tank*).

And “as per usual”, the social & recreational program was both varied and generous.

This included a one-day tour of Antalya and its environs – and visits to private hospitals and a very large resort (offering Health Tourism-related services).

Of particular historical interest was a stop at Aspendos to see the best-preserved Roman theatre in Turkey, and one of the best in the world.

Those who went on to also attend the Health Tourism Conference organized by the Association at the TUYAP Expomed and Labtech Fairs in Istanbul, were treated to a cruise and dinner on the Bosphorus and a “walking” tour of Istanbul – which included a visit to Aghia Sophia, the Blue Mosque and the huge “old market”.

Dr. Dursun Aydin, the man behind it all was omnipresent and seemed to have time for all who wanted his time and attention.

In 2010 the Congress will be held in Istanbul – the year during which the city will be the “European Capital of Culture”.

Some background to the Annual Congress

This Congress was the second annual international event on Health Tourism to be held in Turkey.

It was organized by the “Association of Improving Health Tourism” (Turkey) and overseen and coordinated by its President, Dr. Dursun Aydin.

The primary objective of the Congress was to obtain knowledge from international and national Health Tourism experts and industry *insiders* and spread this to the domain stakeholders.

The additional aim was to highlight some of Turkey's Health Tourism "offerings" (providers and facilities).

An associated exhibition of Services and Hospital Equipment ran parallel to the Congress.

Note: The Congress in Antalya was literally an event with an *extension* (in Istanbul). The one-day Istanbul event which followed (5 March) was one of the Conference elements of the country's largest hospital equipment exhibition / fair (annually organized by TUYAP – see more on this below).

The 2010 Congress

In 2010 the event will be held in Istanbul – the year during which the city will be the "European Capital of Culture" (see more on this below).

The Congress

250 participants (including 60 from outside Turkey, representing 25 countries) attended the event.

For several of the participants, the Congress provided an opportunity to spend almost a week in Turkey and visit some of the better known private hospitals – including those of the very prominent Acibadem Group (a strong supporter of the Association and the Health Tourism industry, generally – see more on the Group, below).

The Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony was attended by several national dignitaries who in short speeches pledged their support of the industry and the work of the Association.

These included:

- The Minister of Culture and Tourism
- The Ministry of Health Under-Secretary
- The Mayor of Antalya

The Opening Ceremony Introductory Speech was delivered by Dr. Dursun Aydin (President of the "Association of Improving Health Tourism").

The Government representatives and other dignitaries had the interest to stay on and listen to all the presentations in the first thematic session (General Overview of Health Tourism).

The Conference Program

In all, there were 28 presentations and 11 mini-workshops.

The Keynote Presentation was delivered by Dr. Constantine Constantinides.

The Thematic Sessions covered 6 Topics:

- A general view and overview of Health Tourism
- Quality and Standardization

- The Global Financial Crisis and its Effect on Health Tourism
- Health Tourism Marketing and Promotion
- Health Tourism Destinations, Provider Organizations and Medical Tourism Facilitation
- Spa and Thermalism

(The Congress website: www.saglikturizmi2009.org).

Invited and Hosted Guests and Speakers

There were *Invited and Hosted* speakers from 8 countries - (in alphabetical order: Austria, Germany, Greece, India, Jordan, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America).

The Association also hosted a number of industry insiders and journalists from countries in the Middle East and the Balkan region, to cover the event.

The ht8 Approach to Health Tourism Integration, Develop and Promotion

During the Opening Ceremony, it was announced that the “Association of Improving Health Tourism” was committed to adopting and promoting the *ht8* approach to Integration, Development and Promotion of Health Tourism.

Note: *ht8* (or Health Tourism 8) refers to the industry segments:

- Medical Tourism
- Dental Tourism
- Spa (and Thalassotherapy) Tourism
- Wellness and Fitness Tourism
- Sports Tourism
- Culinary Tourism
- Accessible Tourism
- Assisted Residential Tourism

ht8 is a concept and approach introduced in 2008 by healthCare cybernetics (an international Health Tourism Sector *think and do tank*).

Social and Recreational Program

“As per usual”, the social and recreational program was both varied and generous.

The Congress attendees were initially taken on a one-day tour of Antalya and its environs – which included visits to private hospitals and a very large resort (offering Health Tourism-related services).

Of particular historical interest was a stop at Aspendos (37 km west of Antalya) to see the best-preserved Roman theatre in Turkey, and one of the best in the world.

Another highlight of the social program was the *Gala Dinner* (at which even the most conservative and stern attendees “let their hair down”).

Those who also attended the Istanbul event were treated to a cruise and dinner on the Bosphorus or “Istanbul Strait” (hosted by the local Port Authority) and a “walking” tour of Istanbul – which included a visit to Aghia Sophia (a

breath-taking experience – read more on this below), the Blue Mosque and the huge “old market”.

Dr. Dursun Aydin, the man behind it all was omnipresent and seemed to have time for all who wanted his time and attention.

The Venue

The Congress was held at the (Ottoman architectural style) *Topkapi Palace* (a 900-room seaside resort hotel – part of the *World of Wonders* group).

Providing Additional Background and Context

Istanbul - "European Capital of Culture" - 2010

The "European Capital of Culture" event gives European cities the opportunity to present a cultural programme lasting a year, highlighting the richness, diversity and shared characteristics of Europe's cultures. Over the past twenty years, the event has been very successful in terms of media response and the associated cultural and socio-economic development of the cities concerned.

The initiative and institution was launched by the Council of Ministers in 1985 and has become one of the EU's most popular actions. Because of the high level of citizen participation and its cultural and socio-economic impact, a growing number of cities compete every year for the title.

Aghia Sophia

(Aghia Sophia – Saint Sophia – “Sophia” is also the Greek word for *wisdom*).

Aghia Sophia in Istanbul (the largest Byzantine Christian Cathedral) was built over a 5-year period (starting in 532 A.D.).

From 1453 to 1934 it was used as an Islamic mosque and in 1922 (on the orders of Mustapha Kemal Ataturk) it became a museum.

During restoration work, impressive Byzantine mosaics were uncovered on the upper gallery.

The main floor has displays of Islamic mosque features.

The Acibadem Group

Much can be said about the Acibadem Group - its humble beginnings, its commitment, its leadership role and its now much-deserved prominence.

But for the compiler of this Report Back, what really makes the Group stand out as an international *Exemplar* is its “Total Integration” approach – which provides the infrastructure and resources with which to innovate.

Besides the several *high-end* Hospitals, the Group includes a Catering & Cleaning Company, a University / Medical School, a Health and Life Insurance Company and a Project Management Company (design, construction and management of healthcare facilities).

The Group is also a champion and example-setter of eHealth practices implementation. Its hospitals / healthcare facilities are *near-paperless* (national laws and regulations mandate that certain documents be in “paper form”).

The TUYAP Group (Fairs and Exhibitions organizer)

TUYAP is a strong supporter of the Association (and sponsor of its Health Tourism events and initiatives) and of Health Tourism generally.

The 30-year old Group (and *de facto* industry leader) has permanent exhibition and fair facilities in 5 Cities – and stages events addressing several industries (including Health).

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