Meet in Switzerland’s Highest-Knowledge City

A congress city with a long tradition of hosting meetings of all sizes and formats, Davos is perhaps best known as the venue of the World Economic Forum, which gathers around 3,000 leading figures from the worlds of business, politics and science every year. As such, it has all the expertise and the capacity to host association events, as Professor Geoff Richards, Director, AO Research Institute Davos, can surely testify.

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The highest-altitude city and the largest municipality in Switzerland in terms of surface area, Davos has since long been established as a congress, research and clinic destination. What was once only a health resort has developed into what is known today as Science City Davos. The knowledge accumulated here – primarily in the fields of natural science and medicine – has been passed on since the beginning of the 20th century.

In that regards, the AO Foundation leads the way in the treatment of trauma and disorders of the musculoskeletal system. Founded in 1958 as a medically guided, not-for-profit organization led by an international group of surgeons, it has now a global network of over 200,000 healthcare professionals.

Director of the AO Research Institute Davos, one of the four institutes of the AO Foundation, Professor Geoff Richards has been organizing the eCM Conferences for some time now. As the place where clinicians and industry meet, it brings together, by design, a rather limited number of participants (max 200) to ensure ample opportunities for knowledge sharing in basic, translational and clinical research. In this context, scientists of all kinds, including biologists, engineers and material experts, bring clinical problems to the table, consider industrial requirements of possible solutions and often initiate collaborative projects to answer these clinical problems.

"But our flagship congress is the one that the AO Foundation has been running every year in December since 1960 in Davos and since 1969 at Davos Congress Centre", says Professor Richards. "It brings together around 1,500 surgeons from different specialties, from spine to trauma and veterinary and now re-con (joint replacement). The Foundation is the biggest educator in this field in the world. We run numerous courses around the world every year: there were 832 educational events (courses, seminars and symposia) in 2018, plus 53 courses for operational room personnel (ORP) – and our pinnacle courses are in Davos. Overall we taught around 61,000 surgeons and 2,400 ORP last year on operations skills and basic knowledge behind surgeries.”

Historically, because there was a need for a place to hold some advanced training courses in several fields, the
Davos Congress Centre was built in 1969, where the World Economic Forum has been held every year since 1971. As Davos progressively developed into an internationally known congress location, the Congress Centre was extended in 1979, and again in 1989 and 2010, to cope with an ever-increasing number of participants. Today, Davos Congress Centre has an overall capacity of 5,000 participants.

"With respect to holding a congress at Davos Congress Centre, nearly everything can be organized for you by Davos Congress and its PCO service, which is very convenient," says Professor Richards. "Accommodation can be booked through their website, from budget hotels to all-stars facilities. In general, rates are cheaper than in the rest of Europe, and the quality is good. Davos Congress Centre can cater to all needs from budget congresses to high-end events such as the World Economic Forum of course, which I personally attend each year. The venue is really of top quality and its staff very flexible and professional. There are many rooms that can be used for parallel meetings and its large, lecture hall can accommodate up to 1,800 pax. I have just run my eCM congress on bone infection there, and it was flawless."