

## The 182<sup>nd</sup> WMA Council Meeting

**T**he Israeli Medical Association had the privilege of hosting this year's World Medical Association Council meeting at the Hilton Tel Aviv.

The meeting went smoothly. The discussions were fruitful and agreement was reached on many of the statements. The scope of topics discussed was broad, including child

health, medical neutrality, stem cells and the use of placebos. However, my greatest delight was being able to host my long-time friends and colleagues from the WMA in my home country.

Before beginning the actual Council session, an optional informative session was offered by the Israel Medical Association. As an Israeli, I am constantly bombarded with questions from my colleagues abroad that reflect the complexity of the region in which I live. The recent conflict in Gaza and continued worry in the Middle East over the threat of a nuclear Iran have only increased the amount of inquiries that I receive. This session provided essential background information on many of the issues frequently covered by foreign news agencies, to those WMA participants who wished to attend. Mr. Neil Lazarus is an expert on the Middle East and speaks to over 25,000 people a year through his seminars. Having him speak with WMA Council visitors was a great opportunity to discuss the reality in the Middle East and I appreciate those who spent their free time in order to hear him.

**“As an Israeli, I am constantly bombarded with questions from my colleagues abroad that reflect the complexity of the region in which I live”**

The Israel Medical Association introduced a draft statement on inequalities in health at this year's Council meeting. In preparation for this statement, a survey was sent out to national medical associations in order to assess the situation in various countries and see what steps are being taken by NMAs in combating inequalities. With results from medical associations in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the survey showed that there is still much work to be done by associations in the fight against disparities in health. With the creation of a work group on the topic at the Council meeting, I believe that the WMA will develop this area so that national medical associations are at the forefront of this important effort.

Participants arrived to Israel from countries near and far. For many, this was their first trip to the country that is holy to three major religions. Participants experienced the meaning of that on Thursday, May 14 when we travelled to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, we saw the Church of the Holy Sepulcher where



■ Participants at the WMA council meeting



■ Dr. Dana Hansen speaking with Dr. Yoram Blachar

Jesus was crucified and buried. We saw the Al-Aqsa Mosque which is the second oldest mosque in Islam and the third in holiness and importance after those in Mecca. We also had a chance to visit the Western Wall which has remained intact since the destruction of the Second Jerusalem Temple. It was my pleasure to participate in this tour and give WMA guests a taste of Israel. We were led through the Jewish quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, the Arab market (or, as we call it, *shuk*) and we tasted traditional Middle-Eastern cookies and drank freshly squeezed lemonade with mint leaves. In the *shuk* our senses were overpowered with the strong smells of coffee, tobacco and spices, the vibrant colors of the different fabrics and intricate tapestries, as well as the history of the place. Our tour ended at the historical City of David where ac-

**“ Israel, as a melting pot and home to people of all nationalities and religions was a fitting place to host the WMA, which itself is an amalgam of people from various countries, languages and cultures”**

tors and musicians painted us a picture of what it meant to live in Jerusalem at the time of the Temple. This was a truly unique experience. We continued at the City of David with dinner and musical entertainment in the olive garden.

Israel, as a melting pot and home to people of all nationalities and religions was a fitting place to host the WMA, which itself is an amalgam of people from various countries, languages and cultures. Our common language, medicine, unites us and allows us to work together to reach common goals, making the WMA what it is—an outstanding organization.

WMA meetings in general and this year’s Council Meeting in Tel Aviv in particular, provided another great opportunity for physicians from around the globe to become acquainted with one another, socialize and discuss common issues and challenges in an informal manner. It was a pleasure and my privilege to host this year’s Council Meeting in our home country.

› **Dr. Yoram Blachar**

IMA President, May 2009



■ Dr. Yoram Blachar and Dr. Leonid Eidelman

## The 41st Israeli Medical Association Congress

**A** new president was elected at the 41st Israeli Medical Association Congress, which was held in Jerusalem on 8-11<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

After 14 years of serving as president of the Israeli Medical Association, Dr. Yoram Blachar finished his role after 3 terms and was replaced by Dr. Leonid Eidelman.

In his farewell speech, Dr. Blachar reviewed the development of the work at the IMA since he started there as president.

Dr. Blachar believes that what makes our organization powerful is the integration of the work we do with the Israeli health system along with our rich activities as a union. As long as the IMA establishes itself as an organization that acts out of true concern for patients, it will continue to strengthen itself also for its member physicians.

In his inaugural speech, Dr. Eidelman emphasized the work that needs to be done to improve the position of the physicians in Israel as well as advancing medicine.

On behalf of the Israeli Medical Association we congratulate Dr. Eidelman on his election and we wish Dr. Blachar bon voyage on his new path.