



You had to be there! The Eighth Annual Meeting in Copenhagen

by Fiona Swain

At the end of each annual meeting, the old-timers can be heard to declare "This year's conference was the best so far!" and they'd be right. As EMWA goes from strength to strength, so does our annual meeting. With its best attendance yet (120 delegates) and a more varied programme than ever before, we were in for a real treat as the conference lived up to the motto of the city of Copenhagen, "Wonderful, wonderful".

For newcomers there were opportunities to make new contacts and discover the fellowship that exists in EMWA, the camaraderie that comes from meeting other writers with the same aims and ambitions, problems and challenges. For old-timers there were opportunities to renew friendships and discover how many of us have changed companies or gone freelance over the last year. For all, there was the tremendous opportunity to learn the latest techniques of our art, to brush up on skills learnt some time ago and to discover more about other areas of medical writing.

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The first two days of the meeting were packed with an array of workshops – at least three to choose from at each session. Whether it was to learn about project management, brush up on sentence structure, delve into the complicated world of pharmacoeconomics or find out how to write better pharmaceutical copy, there was something for everyone. The workshop leaders were, as always, of the very highest calibre and among the most experienced in our profession. As those who have been to the annual meeting know, these dedicated people speak with an enthusiasm that is hard to resist. This is not a conference where the delegates fall asleep!

Our keynote speaker on the last day was Peter Bonne Eriksen, Vice-President of Development at Novo Nordisk. He spoke about the future of the pharmaceutical industry past the year 2000, giving us some of his own predictions of how the industry might change. He suggested that the giant pharmaceutical companies may split into smaller, specialist companies and that we may see more direct advertising/selling to the patient in Europe. He did, however, point out that predictions can be unreliable and that the totally unpredictable can happen, for example, who predicted that the Berlin wall would come down? One thing is sure: there will be exciting changes ahead.

After the keynote speech, Alistair Reeves from Hoechst Marion Roussel gave a presentation on the use of Documentum as a document management tool and gave us some sound advice on the Dos and Don'ts of using such a system. It seems such tools can be of benefit when used properly but that there is still room for improvement on the software front.

One of the benefits of the annual meeting is the opportunity for networking and, to this end, the social programme also plays an important part. This year we were sponsored by Novo Nordisk, who not only provided financial support but gave of their time to ensure we enjoyed ourselves. The conference dinner, in the beautiful Tivoli gardens, was a success. Those who lasted the duration will testify that the most memorable thing about the evening was the firework display... and the close proximity of the spectators to the action (some of the more cowardly among us were seen covering behind the nearest large tree). On another evening, we had a choice of guided tours: the zoo, Christiania (an alternative hippy commune in an abandoned military barracks) or the city by bike. The sun shone all week and Danish pastries, lager (probably the best in the world) and marinated herrings were all in abundance (the herrings being slightly less popular than the beer and pastries but all part of the experience).

As always, a host of volunteers put in a lot of hard work, for which we were all grateful. The business meeting ran smoothly under the capable hands of Geoff Hall, our new president. EMWA took an important step in officially becoming a company limited by guarantee and held its first annual general meeting as such. Keith Veitch was elected as Vice-President and Julia Forjanic Klapproth as Membership Officer. No doubt we will be hearing more from both of them. All that remains to say is that if you were there in Copenhagen, you have your smelly bag to remind you of a great conference. If you weren't there, too bad you missed it, but next year in Dublin promises to be even better. . . See you there!

Fiona Swain
42 Walter Road,
Wokingham
Berkshire, RG41 3JA,
UK
fiona@swain.u-net.com

More articles about the conference including transcripts of the plenary sessions will be appearing in *TWS* throughout the coming year.

