‘Keeping the focus where it matters’ – FIGO responds to 2017’s women’s health challenges

Dear Colleagues

The last month of 2016, enjoying Christmas festivities, was comparatively relaxing compared to the briskness of early 2017! The new year has presented us with more great opportunities, and fresh challenges, with an ever-changing global scene in women’s health.

In early December, I attended the Federation of Obstetric and Gynaecological Societies of India’s (FOGSI) urogynecology conference inauguration, and gave a keynote address on the conservative management of prolapse. I then travelled to Delhi to highlight the need for prophylaxis and an ‘early detection of cancer’ service in the under-developed world, and also the need for FIGO-affiliated societies to sensitise governments to help prevent needless deaths.

Directly after, I spent five days in Rio de Janeiro, with FIGO representatives and the local Brazilian Society Organising Committee, to accomplish ‘spade work’ for the October 2018 FIGO Congress. Initial arrangements were fully discussed – it promises to be a superb Congress in great surroundings. Rio – having held the Olympics – is a truly changed city, ready to welcome 10,000-plus FIGO delegates and their families.

2017 began with the contemplation of fresh ideas for meeting the needs of women’s health.

At the end of January, I attended the All India Congress of Obstetrics and Gynecology (AICOG) in Ahmadabad, India, which boasted an
attendance of over 10,000 delegates. FIGO had a very large presence there, with pre-congress workshops, keynote addresses and a FIGO session. I am honoured to have been awarded the ‘Lifetime Achievement’ award at the inauguration. It is truly a moment of great satisfaction when your own parent body acknowledges your efforts and work.

The FIGO Officers met in London at the beginning of February to take stock of progress and look at the future activities of FIGO. I am pleased to report there was much fruitful deliberation.

Also that month, the International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics (IJGO) held its annual editorial meeting; the FIGO Publications Management Board meeting also took place. The year’s work, under the excellent leadership of Professor Richard Adanu, was analysed, and he expertly guided the new Board, welcoming some renowned additions to its team.

In March I attended the 9th International DIP Symposium on Diabetes, Hypertension, Metabolic Syndrome & Pregnancy in Barcelona where, in the presence of Catalonia’s Minister of Health, I signed the HIP (Hyperglycemia in Pregnancy) Barcelona Declaration in a colourful ceremony. This highlights FIGO’s unstinting efforts – under the dynamic energies of Professor Moshe Hod, FIGO HIP Working Group Chair – to encourage awareness about hyperglycemia in pregnancy. This issue is not only taking a heavy toll on mother and child today, but will do so well into future generations, all over the world, especially in South East Asia and China.

My next visit was to Paris to visit the President of the French College of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians, to discuss the College’s efforts in the French-speaking countries of Africa. Over a convivial lunch meeting, we looked at the ways and means of reducing maternal mortality, including the use of effective contraception strategies to help with this.

I then travelled to Rome to attend a meeting of the International Academy of Human Reproduction. FIGO’s efforts to highlight the issue of infertility as a serious global health problem were presented.

The Nepal society held its annual congress in the colourful city of Kathmandu in the first week of April, with over 800 delegates in attendance. A FIGO session on postpartum contraceptive devices was greatly appreciated.

The FIGO Working Group on Contraception held a meeting in London in April to take stock of current challenging times in this area, and to brainstorm solutions that FIGO can offer to women in need.

There is never a dull moment for an organisation of FIGO’s size and repute – there is a constant commitment by colleagues to work for the betterment of women’s health and human rights. The effort continues.

Best wishes

Professor C N Purandare
FIGO President
2015–2018
Dear Colleagues and Friends

The New Year started with a smell of fresh paint! This followed a renovation that included not only that fresh coat of paint, but also new lighting and new heating equipment throughout our three-storey building. FIGO is very fortunate to own its own property – investing in making this a dynamic and enjoyable working environment is very important, not just for staff, but also for the many Committees and Working Groups that use FIGO House for meetings and gatherings. FIGO HQ belongs to all, and everyone is welcome to come and use its facilities.

On the meeting theme, FIGO is working on its largest gathering ever, when the triennial FIGO World Congress comes to the vibrant and exciting city of Rio de Janeiro from 14–19 October 2018. Together with FIGO’s Brazilian Member Society, FEBRASGO, we are working to make this the best FIGO World Congress ever, with a cutting-edge scientific programme, and an entertaining social programme that will show the very best that Brazil has to offer. The Congress will not only appeal to gynecologists and obstetricians, but also to midwives, nurses, policy makers, government officials and health leaders. Speakers will include leading scientists, policy makers, government officials and health leaders. Speakers will include leading scientists and clinicians, along with prominent opinion leaders, policy makers and, most importantly, women speaking from first-hand experience. To receive regular updates, register your interest at www.FIGO2018.org and save the dates!

As your new Chief Executive, I feel privileged to represent the profession and women’s health in general. Having worked for a number of international membership federations, I know and understand the importance of membership and how to add value. As FIGO develops a new Strategic Plan, the Officers and I want to hear Member Societies’ thoughts on what they think needs to happen and what support is required from FIGO. A membership survey was recently sent to Societies, Committee and Working Group Chairs and Executive Board members to solicit opinions on a number of issues. As a membership organisation we are all ‘family’, and, as such, FIGO needs to understand and better respond to our members’ needs.

As FIGO embarks on a new and exciting direction, it needs to communicate more effectively. There is so much excellent work being done by our Committees and Working Groups, with support from dedicated staff, but further investment to strengthen our communications will be made. FIGO is also looking to diversify its projects, and this includes developing a range of educational offerings. I am very pleased to announce that the owners of the Global Library of Women’s Medicine (www.glwom.com), David and Paula Bloomer, have offered FIGO the opportunity to bring this educational platform under the FIGO umbrella. Over the coming months FIGO will integrate this further, complementing other resources such as FIGO’s own journal, the International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics (IJGO).

At the start of my professional career, I made a commitment to myself: make the biggest difference to the largest group of people. I feel privileged to work with so many dedicated FIGO leaders and committed staff to help the many women, children and adolescents around the world who need support. The challenge is huge but, as a strong ‘family’, we will eventually claim victory!

Best wishes

Johan Vos
FIGO Chief Executive

International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics

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Readers are invited to refer items for consideration by email to communications@figo.org no later than Friday 16 June 2017 for the next issue.

The views expressed in articles in the FIGO Newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official viewpoint of FIGO.

Produced and edited by Alexandra Gilpin at the FIGO Secretariat © FIGO 2017.
Taking stock – IJGO reviews a whirlwind year and its plans for 2017

2016 was a year filled with exciting developments for IJGO, the official publication of FIGO. In a major change, FIGO announced in July that, from 2017, it would have a new publishing partner and would begin working with Wiley. Work began in earnest on the transition, which has involved an exciting reader-friendly update to the layout of all IJGO articles, a new website within Wiley’s international Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics hub, and a refined online submission system. Alongside these exciting developments, IJGO has recently launched its new mobile app for iOS and Android devices; the new app provides notifications when each new issue is published and allows downloading of articles for offline viewing.

Members of the IJGO Editorial Board were in London recently for the journal’s annual editorial meeting. At the meeting, IJGO had an opportunity to welcome Dr Elizabeth Stringer, Dr Paul Fogarty and Dr Michael Geary as new members, and to bid a fond farewell to those rotating off the board after several years of dedicated service. Board members were updated on IJGO’s busy and productive 2016; the journal processed 1,340 submissions from around the world and published more than 350 articles over 12 issues. The journal also reported an increase in impact factor to 1.674, testament to the vital contributions of IJGO’s staff, editorial board, authors and reviewers.

At the meeting, the board was updated on the rapid progress of IJGO’s social media accounts. Expanded social media activity has resulted in great increases in the number of people engaging with IJGO online, and the journal has been delighted to launch its own YouTube channel to host video content submitted.

Last year, the journal published two supplements: ‘Reducing maternal mortality by preventing unsafe abortion: The Uruguayan experience’, guest edited by Dr Aníbal Faúndes, and ‘Maternal and Neonatal Health in Africa at MDG End: Availability of and Access to Maternal Health Services, and Outcomes of Intervention Strategies’, edited by Professor Seni Kouanda, Dr Rita Kabra and Dr Alexandre Dumont. IJGO was also pleased to publish a themed issue on challenges posed by violence against women; the themed content in the April 2016 issue was accompanied by a Special Editorial written by Professor Rachel Jewkes.

Post-Partum IUD team welcomes Dr Anita Makins!

FIGO is very happy to confirm the addition of Dr Anita Makins as Deputy Director of the FIGO PPIUD Initiative.

Anita is an obstetrician and gynecologist with a Masters in Public Health. Born in Brazil and trained in the UK, she has 17 years’ experience in global women’s health. As a consultant in the UK, she was lead for Diabetes in Pregnancy at Oxford University’s renowned teaching hospital, the John Radcliffe. In low-resource countries she has worked for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Sierra Leone in emergency services and fistula surgery. In Mozambique she ran a maternal health project for the Swiss NGO SolidarMed, working in partnership with the government to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality in the region. She is delighted to take up the post of Deputy Director of the PPIUD initiative and is looking forward to taking the initiative into the final year of its 2nd phase. ‘Throughout my entire career I have worked towards helping reduce maternal mortality. Institutionalising the use of post-partum IUDs has the potential to have enormous impact in the six countries in which we are working. These are very exciting times!’

FIGO HQ steps up to ‘Cross Cultural’ training!

On 30 March 2017, FIGO staff members were treated to a unique training experience, held offsite in London – with much audience participation! – to help them understand the key cultural challenges of the cultures represented by their colleagues and clients, and develop intercultural skills to build more effective business relationships across cultural boundaries.

Feedback on the course was highly positive. Johan Vos commented: ‘I know staff have benefited hugely from this learning experience. As a global body, it is so essential that we understand the impact of culture on work behaviours, and identify culturally appropriate responses. It was great to be able to learn how to adapt our communication styles to be culturally effective across all our work.’

Light entertainment was provided by FIGO’s very own resident singer/musician, Adeedire Pitan, Finance Co-ordinator – a man of incredible talent, his vocal dexterity certainly matches his number crunching!
FIGO sets out its stall at RCOG Congress 2017

In late March 2017, FIGO project teams and IJGO staff attended the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists’ Congress in Cape Town, South Africa. Traffic was brisk to the FIGO booth – this provided an excellent opportunity to educate visitors on the breadth of FIGO’s work on fistula and the FIGO Post Partum IUD Initiative.

Another landmark occasion for FIGO’s HIP Working Group!

The second regional declaration on Hyperglycemia in Pregnancy (HIP) has been signed, this time in Europe, establishing a consensus platform from which to advocate within the region. The signing of this joint FIGO, European Board & College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and European Association of Perinatal Medicine declaration took place at the biennial Diabetes in Pregnancy (DIP) symposium held in Barcelona, Spain, in March.

The declaration provides a call to action to address the link between maternal health and diabetes as a public health priority. Building on from the South Asian declaration which was signed in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in September 2016, the group hopes to have declarations from all FIGO regions by the end of 2018.

The DIP symposium was a very successful event and provided a great opportunity for a number of speakers from FIGO’s perinatal Committees and Working Groups to present on their work. There was also a dedicated FIGO Hyperglycemia in Pregnancy/Nutrition postgraduate course prior to the main conference.

Professor Moshe Hod, Chair of the FIGO HIP Working Group, opening the signing ceremony

With a range of different FIGO Working Group and Committee members present, DIP provided an invaluable opportunity to connect the Chairs of several FIGO perinatal groups to discuss areas for collaboration. There was agreement to work more closely together on certain issues in order to share networks, strengthen outputs, and avoid duplication. Watch this space!

The HIP and APMN webpages have had a makeover! Why not pay a visit to see what else they have been doing recently?

HIP: www.figo.org/working-group-hyperglycemia-pregnancy
APMN: www.figo.org/working-group-adolescent-pre-conception-and-maternal-nutrition

Information courtesy of Jessica Morris, FIGO Project Manager

The HIP Working Group held their meeting during this event, which included a fruitful discussion on progress made and plans for the year, including further regional declarations, publications, dissemination and implementation of the FIGO guidelines on GDM: see https://tinyurl.com/m879wlc.

The FIGO Adolescent, Preconception and Maternal Nutrition (APMN) Working Group also held a meeting in order to work on a range of resources which will be available later this year to support dissemination and implementation of their 2015 recommendations’ publication.
FIGO has recently signed new Memorandums of Understanding with the World Endometriosis Society and the World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists.

The World Endometriosis Society (WES) is delighted to collaborate officially with FIGO to improve women’s health issues, and endometriosis in particular. ‘Up to 10 per cent of premenopausal women and teenagers globally have endometriosis, a disorder that causes pelvic pain and infertility and markedly compromises quality of life. Partnering with FIGO to increase awareness, advocacy, clinical care standards and research for this disease is a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those affected,’ said Linda C. Giudice, MD, PhD, President of WES.

WES is committed to advancing evidence-based standards and innovations for education, advocacy, clinical care and research in endometriosis and related disorders, in collaboration with its stakeholders and global partners to improve the lives of all affected women and their families. ‘With endometriosis we are dealing with a significant personal and societal burden, including a >7 year diagnostic delay due to the normalisation of the symptoms,’ said WES Chief Executive, Lone Hummelshøj, a well-known advocate in endometriosis. This was also highlighted recently in the UK’s Women’s Health All Party Parliamentary Group’s report on how poorly many women with endometriosis are treated. Hummelshøj – together with WES President Elect, Neil Johnson, MD – has convened global consensus workshops since 2011, involving representatives of 29 national and international, medical and non-medical organisations from a range of disciplines, including FIGO. So far, consensuses have been reached on the ‘current management of endometriosis’, the ‘classification of endometriosis’, and the ‘diagnosis of endometriosis’. The next consensus initiative will address ‘patient-centred outcomes in endometriosis’ and will be held in connection with the 13th World Congress on Endometriosis in Vancouver from 17–20 May 2017.

‘WES is about inclusivity and global collaboration,’ said Johnson, a professor of reproductive health at the Robinson Research Institute, University of Adelaide. He emphasises that WES has been leading workshops on research priorities since 2008, involving investigators from across the globe. Importantly these priorities also place focus on what is achievable in low-resource settings. ‘An important outcome of these research priorities’ workshops has been the development of the World Endometriosis Research Foundation’s EPHect tools, which standardise the collection of clinical and surgical data and incorporate standard operating procedures for the collection of biospecimens,’ said Johnson. This ground-breaking initiative paves the way for collaborative and comparative research, which – with time – will, hopefully, lead to targeted diagnostic and treatment discovery in endometriosis.’

Information and photos courtesy of WES

For additional information on the EPHect tools
www.endometriosis.ca

The World Federation of Societies of Anaesthesiologists (WFSA) seeks to ensure universal access to safe anaesthesia and unites hundreds of thousands of anaesthesiologists behind this goal. With a focus on patient care, we deliver our mission by working together on programmes that tackle the barriers to safe and timely access to anaesthesia care.

Anaesthesia is a distinct and essential part of the operating room, ensuring patients make it through the procedure safely and without feeling pain. Anaesthesiologists are vital in ensuring a patient’s safety after surgery, too. They also provide resuscitation and stabilisation of patients in the Emergency Department and, in the Intensive Care Unit, they provide pain relief for women in labour, transport acutely ill and injured patients, plus much more. In high-income settings, anaesthesiologists might typically come into contact with two thirds of all hospital patients. In low- and middle-income countries, high mortality rates in relation to surgical care are often related to a lack of infrastructure, equipment, monitoring and drugs, as well as a shortage of trained personnel. These are all global health challenges that must be addressed. Our programmes are run in partnership with Member Societies of Anaesthesiology and other organisations that share our objectives. We have official liaison with the World Health Organization (WHO), are a founding member of the G4 Alliance, and also work with governments, other legislative bodies, surgical organisations, NGOs, hospitals and training centres. Our impact is felt globally. Education programmes in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America train thousands of anaesthesiologists every year; our publications are accessed by anaesthesia providers working across high-resource and low-resource settings, and our advocacy work brings key issues to the World Health Assembly and other global decision-making fora.

We are proud of over 60 years of working as a Federation and, together with our partners and members, we have done much to achieve our aims – however, with five billion people lacking access to safe and affordable anaesthesia and surgical care when needed, there is a long way to go.

As the WFSA works to advance the crucial role of anaesthesia as a component of universal health coverage around the world, it is vital to have strong partners such as FIGO to ensure a joined-up, multi-disciplinary approach to health systems’ strengthening.

Information and photos courtesy of WFSA

www.wfsahq.org

FIGO and WHO join forces for family planning workshops

FIGO is currently collaborating with WHO on the introduction and dissemination of key WHO family planning guidelines and derivative tools – this is being achieved by holding workshops and cascading training from WHO to members of FIGO Member Societies. One such workshop took place recently with the active involvement of the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria (SOGON).

Dr Chris Agbohgoroma, Workshop Facilitator, commented: ‘The workshop was highly successful – close to 70 professionals attended, including most SOGON Council members representing most of the states in the country. The majority of participants were extremely satisfied with the workshop content and expressed an interest to train others. It was a most valuable experience.’

The workshop facilitators during the recent SOGON Conference in Akure, Nigeria; L–R: Professor J Mutihar; Professor A Adekunle; and Dr C Agbohgoroma

Working with FIGO

Julian Gore-Booth, WFSA Chief Executive Officer, said: ‘Mutual sharing and collaboration between the WFSA and FIGO will be extremely beneficial to obstetricians, gynecologists, anaesthesiologists and their patients. Both organisations are deeply committed to improving mother and child health around the world, and with 300,000 mothers dying every year during childbirth, the challenges we face and the impact we can make are significant.’
FIGO enjoys a close relationship with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM). The upcoming 31st ICM Triennial Congress will take place in Toronto, Canada from 18-22 June 2017 – visit www.midwives2017.org for full details. FIGO will be involved in the following partner plenary panels:

FIGO panel: Working to address diverse issues in women’s health: examples from FIGO’s current work and strategies for a joined up approach between healthcare providers Monday 19 June 2017 @ 11:00–12:30 Facilitated by the FIGO Chief Executive, Johan Vos, this session will provide examples from FIGO’s work on gestational diabetes, nutrition, violence against women, unsafe abortion and contraception. Our presenters will describe the work, the specific relevance to midwives, and offer suggestions on how obstetricians/gynecologists and midwives can work closer together to make greater progress towards our shared goal of improving women’s health.

Ipsas-WHO-FIGO panel: Emerging evidence for improving midwifery care through the course: quality and access of contraception and abortion interventions to save women’s lives Monday 19 June 2017 @ 14:00–15:30 This panel will review key recommendations on three key topics from recent WHO guidance related to pre-pregnancy: ensuring human rights in contraceptive care, expanding health worker roles in abortion and post-abortion contraception, and eligibility criteria and practice recommendations for contraceptive care. Presenters will cover practical information to improve pre-pregnancy care and help midwives provide the full range of essential competencies in midwifery practice.

FIGO-Gynuity panel: New technologies and models for facilitating timely management of postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) at all levels of care Tuesday 20 June 2017 @ 14:00–15:30 Facilitated by Gynuity Health Projects’ President Beverly Winkoff, this session showcases new technologies and innovative models of PPH care with relevance to all settings, but particularly lower levels of the healthcare systems where treatment options are few. Findings from recent community-based studies evaluating models of PPH management with misoprostol in Afghanistan, Egypt, India and Pakistan will be discussed, along with new research on cord control and the use of uterine-balloon tamponade. The utility of current PPH definitions and the potential for alternatives to blood loss in diagnosis, such as shock index, will also be discussed.

Gynuity Health Projects’ panel: Global models, new evidence and recommendations supporting the critical role of midwives and other health providers in improving access to abortion care Wednesday 21 June 2017 @ 11:00–12:30 This session highlights regional models and lessons learned from around the world, demonstrating the key role of midwives and other health providers in expanding access to safe abortion, including menstrual regulation and postabortion care. These regional innovations provide important examples of how programmes can move towards implementing new WHO guidelines that recommend expanded health worker roles for safe abortion care.

Information courtesy of Jessica Morris, FIGO Project Manager

Spreading the word about Essential Interventions

The Nepal Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NESOG), the Nepal Pediatric Society (NEPAS) and the Midwifery Society of Nepal (MIDSON) recently came together to disseminate the research findings of the FIGO Essential Interventions project in Nepal.

It was the first joint initiative to have formalised the systems and structure for joint working between obstetricians, paediatricians and midwives to improve the quality of care for mothers and babies. The study provides preliminary information on the effects and effectiveness of the multifaceted interventions and the impact of joint working on the use of Essential Interventions.

The January dissemination in Kathmandu was evaluated positively, with a great deal of interest in the project from stakeholders. It was attended by 120 delegates representing the three professional associations – FIGO, ICM and IPA – two facilities, the Family Health Division of the Ministry of Health and other NGOs and INGOs.

Dr Rolina Dhital, National Co-ordinator for the Joint Initiative, said: ‘The Joint Initiative has been a catalyst to empower and bring together all three professional groups. There has been interest from other professionals – anaesthetists and academics, for example – to contribute to the professional development within the facilities.’
The FIGO World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics is the single largest global congress on maternal and infant health, bringing together obstetricians, gynecologists and related health professionals from around the world.

The Congress Scientific programme will offer a cutting-edge line-up of renowned international speakers that will appeal to all audiences: clinicians, health workers, policy makers, global agencies, health care leaders and industry specialists alike - passionate professionals concerned with maternal and infant health and well-being.

The incredible city of Rio de Janeiro will host the Congress - experience its tremendous beauty, attractions, culture and people.

The topics include:

- Maternal Fetal Health
- Clinical Obstetrics
- General Gynecology
- Operative Gynecology
- Reproductive Medicine
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
- Urogynecology
- Gynecological Oncology
- Women’s Health Issues and Policy

Register your interest today and join an estimated 8,000 delegates for the FIGO 2018 World Congress - it promises to be an unforgettable learning and networking experience.

FIGO warmly invites you and looks forward to seeing you in Rio.

‘The global voice for women’s health’

www.FIGO2018.org