

World Federation of Associations of Pediatric Surgeons



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Dear Wofaps Members,

It is truly a great honor to serve as the President of the World Federation of Associations of Pediatric Surgeons (WOFAPS). Under the leadership of several of our past presidents (Professors Cywes, Miyano, Grosfeld, Coran and Puri), WOFAPS has become an organization of significance and global importance. This is an opportune time for WOFAPS to continue to mature and fulfill its still under tapped potential. I see a great opportunity for us to collectively make strides improving and impacting the surgical care and outcomes of children especially in developing countries.

During Professor Prem Puri's presidency (2008-2010) several important milestones and advances occurred including:

1. Creation of the WOFAPS Foundation (chaired by initially Prof. Jay Grosfeld). The WOFAPS Foundation Scholarships have been awarded for the first time in 2009. Prof. Puri has assumed the chair position January 1, 2011.
2. WOFAPS Executive committee involvement in World Area meetings. The latest was held in conjunction with the Iberoamerican Congress in Havana, Cuba, March 2010. The congress was a great success in bringing WOFAPS closer to our colleagues throughout Latin America and the Caribbean region.
3. Organizing two Summits of Presidents or representatives of AAP, APSA, BAPS, EUPSA, JAPS, PAPS and WOFAPS – Prof. Jay Grosfeld chaired these summits which were organized to create a vehicle to provide improved coordination and information sharing between these organizations most of whom have significant international activities. The ability to pool resources for mutually agreed upon priorities will be explored in future summits.
4. Important changes in the WOFAPS Constitution were ratified in New Delhi clarifying the terms of office and succession process. In addition, there was a change in the timing selection of the World Congress venues to 6 years in advance. Berlin will be the venue for 2013 and Washington DC for 2016.
5. A superb 3rd World Congress of Pediatric Surgery in New Delhi, India was organized by Professors Devendra Gupta and Prem Puri. The truly exceptional scientific program was very diverse and covered the entire spectrum of children's surgical topics. In addition, the arrangements, the social functions and venue were outstanding in every aspect. More than a thousand delegates from over 75 countries participated in this great educational event.

All of us are very grateful to Prof. Prem Puri for his dynamic and visionary leadership, as well as his tireless work on behalf of WOFAPS. We look forward to Prem's continued leadership roles as Foundation President and past president of WOFAPS going forward.

I also want to acknowledge and thank Prof. Jose (Pepe) Boix-Ochoa who has managed WOFAPS as General Secretary for approximately 3 decades. His impact and ongoing contributions to WOFAPS will be appropriately highlighted and honored in the future.

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Suffice it to say is that Pepe is at the heart of WOFAPS and his enormous daily service, ambassadorial prowess and strategic thinking has been vital to the development and maturation of WOFAPS. This is Pepe's last term as General Secretary and the executive committee and council of delegates has ratified a succession plan. Prof. Alastair Millar is the Secretary General Elect. He will be working closely with Pepe, myself and the entire executive committee in order to assume this important role in 2014.

Strategic Goals for 2011-2013

The impact and importance as well as influence of WOFAPS continue to increase. However, WOFAPS will not thrive and develop further without the perception (and reality) that it brings significant value to Pediatric Surgical organizations and pediatric surgeons throughout the world. WOFAPS is now in a position to achieve the mission of truly improving the surgical care of children through:

1. Holding high quality and affordable World Congresses and regional workshops/conferences. These congresses can have significantly enhanced global reach by routinely utilizing web based technologies where and when appropriate.
2. Providing excellent learning and career development opportunities for individual surgeons with an emphasis of supporting surgeons from developing countries who will be building the capacity and improve the level of care for children in their countries.
3. The WOFAPS Foundation will be increasing its financial corpus to be able to fund/support more educational scholarships. This is a daunting task in view of global economics but still achievable.
4. Harnessing the expertise of experienced pediatric surgeons to support educational, disaster relief work and system building in developing countries.
5. Being a resource or partnering with other organizations such as the IPA and Global Paediatric Surgery Network to achieve specific goals that benefit children world-wide and to be a global advocate for the health needs and rights of children.

Operational Objectives 2011-2013

I have called an Extraordinary Executive Committee meeting of WOFAPS to occur concurrent with the February CIP meeting in Paris. The incoming Executive Committee leadership felt that it was important to discuss and finalize the WOFAPS 2011-2013 operational plan as well as some longer term strategic goals prior to the regularly scheduled Executive Meeting which will occur in June EUPSA meeting in Barcelona. In the February meeting we will be expanding on the initial ideas and proposals presented in New Delhi. Some of the key areas of focus include:

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1. Improve the WOFAPS web page and functionality. Dr. Takashi Doi has agreed to become the webmaster for WOFAPS after being nominated at the council of Delegates. With the extramural funding obtained through the efforts of Prof. Prem Puri, we now have the means to accomplish a major upgrade in content and functionality of the WOFAPS web site in the near future.
2. Integration of WOFAPS with the Global Paediatric Surgery Network developed and managed by Dr. Marilyn Butler. This will serve as a clearing house for Pediatric Surgeons and Pediatric Surgery Organizations who need information regarding missions, disaster relief activities, educational opportunities, and scholarships. Furthermore links will be provided to key organizations as well useful information about Associations and institutional endeavors, country/regional needs and a global calendar of events.
3. The development of a Humanitarian Response Task force which will be headed by Prof. Henri Ford from Los Angeles. He has had significant experience in Haiti after the recent earthquake. The purpose of this Task Force will be to figure out how to successfully tap into extensive expertise and human professional capital of WOFAPS and to create a mechanism to identify and deploy volunteer Pediatric Surgeons to be part of larger humanitarian efforts following disasters. WOFAPS creating alliances with both governmental and non-governmental agencies such as Medecin Sans Frontiers will be an important part of this endeavor. The humanitarian response activities and opportunities for matching needs and volunteers could be coordinated through the Global Paediatric Surgery Network.
4. In the past the General Secretary, President and a small cadre of other leaders managed the majority of affairs of WOFAPS. The members of the Executive Committee share an enormous depth of experience and talents that should be harnessed. Operationally there needs to be clarification of roles and responsibilities of each of the positions of Executive Committee – This will be discussed at the Paris meeting. I will be seeking input and recommendations to codify responsibilities and the leadership roles of the President Elect, Vice President and world area representatives. The Past Presidents will continue to serve an important advisory role and also be active in the Foundation.
5. There are a number of sub-committees that report to the Executive Committee (Education Committee, Research Committee and Scientific Committee). Although the scientific committee has been very active with planning of congresses and reviewing/selecting abstracts for presentation, the other 2 committees have not been particularly effective. It is my opinion that the education committee has great potential but needs a clearer charter and defined focus. The President will appoint the Chair and members with advice and input from Executive Committee. The research committee has been inactive for some time and needs to be eliminated. Organizing research activities across countries appears not to be a high priority and beyond the scope of WOFAPS at this time. Fortunately, there are other mechanisms that are developing to address the research collaborations across institutions and countries.

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6. Finally, WOFAPS has reached a size and scope that requires more professional management support. The executive committee will be examining and discussing this issue. The goal will be to improve the functionality and efficiency of WOFAPS. Some of the benefits would include improving fundraising, managing collections of dues, communications with Associations and delegates. Ensuring that the Web content is kept contemporary and relevant. WOFAPS should be able to expand its reach and enhancing its impact. We will manage this in a fiscally responsible way to ensure our long-term viability with growth as an organization.

There are other nascent ideas and opportunities being discussed and developed – too many to articulate cogently in a brief newsletter. During the next three years, the leadership team will be open to exploring new ideas that will enhance the mission and impact of WOFAPS.

I am enthusiastically looking forward to serving as President and working with all of you to continue to better position WOFAPS to fulfill the vision of improving the lives of children with surgical diseases throughout the world.

I wish you and your families a most Happy, Healthy and Peaceful Year ahead.

Warmest regards,

Richard G. Azizkhan
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