

Kurdish Medical Association in the UK (KuMA - UK)

Report on the First Scientific Conference of Hawler Medical University

Introduction

Under the banner “To promote the medical education in Iraqi Kurdistan” Hawler Medical University (HMU) held its first scientific conference from 26th to 28th April 2008, in Hawler (Erbil), the capital of Kurdistan region.

The conference was attended by over 400 delegates from all parts of Iraq and neighbouring countries. Over 100 papers were presented in addition to 12 keynote lectures by invited speakers from the United Kingdom (UK), Sweden, Jordan and the Netherlands.

Overall the conference was a great success and of high quality and the organisers should be congratulated for their endless efforts. Some of the very positive aspects of the conference were:

- 1. Presentations included a number of high quality original research projects and covered a wide range of clinical and basic science topics as well as medical and nursing education. The standard of presentations would certainly level with materials presented at International Conferences in the region and in Europe. This reflects a robust and meticulous process of selection by the scientific committee.**
- 2. The supporting personnel (IT and Secretarial) were fantastic and worked very hard and remained in control of the situation. They coped very well with the last minute changes in the programme and gave regular updates to participants. It was due to their tremendous hard work that the conference continued to run smoothly.**
- 3. Time keeping during platform presentations and key note lectures was excellent, and undoubtedly superior to some conferences run regionally or in Europe. The organisers need to be congratulated on their efforts and hard work.**
- 4. The refreshments and meals at the conference were commendable.**
- 5. Social activities including visits to surrounding areas was a wonderful idea and very enjoyable for participants.**
- 6. Conference pack was very well thought through and comprehensive.**
- 7. The venue was well suited for the purpose.**

We recommend making this conference a regular event to occur every two years.

Areas for improvement/recommendations for future:

Communication/publicity:

- Earlier announcement of the conference in future (aiming for 12 months prior to the event) and inviting papers/abstracts well in advance with a longer interval between closing date for submission and the date of the conference (minimum 3 months).
- Clearer communication regarding registration fees for those participating from inside and outside Kurdistan. Also clearer communication about costs covered for invited/guest speakers.
- Identifying non Kurdish guest speakers from outside Kurdistan and inviting them at least six months prior to the conference.
- To have a draft programme well in advance outlining the presentations/topics for each day. This is important even if some speakers have not yet confirmed.
- Authors who submit papers/abstracts should be notified about the outcome of the scientific committee's evaluation of their paper in a timely manner, whether their paper was accepted or rejected. Also those whose papers are accepted should be told how much time they will have for their presentation at the conference.

Organisation:

- Introducing themes for each session and trying to match the presentations for each session accordingly.
- Limiting the number of Keynote Lectures to two a day (first in the morning and last in the afternoon) to accommodate all participants, with no simultaneous parallel sessions when a Keynote lecture is delivered. Also allowing more than 20 minutes (45 minutes) for these lectures.
- Allowing time for questions to be asked at the end of each paper presented rather than at the end of the session. This would mean allowing more time for each paper, for example, 13 minutes maximum (10 minutes for presentation and 3 minutes for questions/answers).

Submission/Presentations:

- Initial submissions to the evaluating (scientific) committee to be in the form of abstracts rather than full papers. The final decision about publishing the paper in ZANCO should be made after the presentation at the conference. Those whose presentations are approved for publication should then be asked to submit the full paper.

- Introducing the idea of Poster Presentations in future conferences. This would encourage submission of material particularly and broaden the horizon for younger trainees, whilst ensuring the standard and quality of oral presentations.

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