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THE EDITOR'S CORNER

An American in Paris

When I told my friends I had to go to Paris for an orthodontic conference, I must say I didn't get much sympathy. Of course, most of us don't normally have the opportunity to walk out of a meeting, hop on the Métro, and head over to the Louvre for a few hours of browsing. Or to see the Eiffel Tower blazing with light on the way back from a business dinner at a neighborhood bistro. But despite the obvious attractions of Paris in September, the real story of the recent World Federation of Orthodontists meeting was the ability of the organization to produce a successful convention outside the United States.

The WFO was officially founded in 1995, at the Fourth International Orthodontic Congress in San Francisco. There, what had been a rather informal gathering, held every five years, became a formal organization of 69 orthodontic bodies from 62 countries. Subsequent WFO meetings have coincided with the IOC, but the first two also coincided with annual meetings of the AAO—in San Francisco and, in 2000, in Chicago. American orthodontists might have been forgiven for failing to notice the presence of the WFO amid the hubbub of their traditional get-together.

This year's sixth IOC was thus the first WFO conference to be separated from an AAO convention. It was organized primarily by the two French orthodontic societies, with assistance from the other European national associations, under the leadership of Olivier Mauchamp of Grenoble, France. Lee Graber, current President of the WFO, arranged a star-studded lineup of "world champion lectures" for the opening day: Bjorn Zachrisson (Norway), Hans Pancherz (Germany), Roberto Lima Filho (Brazil), Vincent Kokich (United States), Junji Sugawara (Japan), Yehya Mostafa (Egypt), and Wayne Sampson (Australia). Over the subsequent two days, the schedule of keynote lectures and brief presentations, divided among three amphitheatres, resembled that of any AAO meeting. The final day was given over to the European societies for "European Village" programs in various languages. The entire proceedings, including staff programs,

table clinics, and poster presentations, have already been published by Quintessence in an enormous supplement to the *World Journal of Orthodontics*.

The Palais des Congrès in Paris, at least by American convention center standards, is somewhat long on underground shopping boutiques and short on meeting space. Exhibitors, including the major manufacturers and a few smaller American and European companies, were shoe-horned into the hallways and corners of the two floors. When I spoke to Dr. Mauchamp, however, he was justifiably proud of the turnout—about 5,000 orthodontists, slightly fewer than normally attend the AAO annual meeting. To be sure, the numbers of staff members and exhibitors were far fewer than at an AAO convention, but it was an impressive showing nonetheless.

I didn't see many American orthodontists other than invited speakers. Considering the timing of the WFO in the middle of AAO constituent

society meetings, the travel distance, and the cost of staying in Paris (compounded by an unfavorable exchange rate), it may not be surprising that the audience looked like a European Society crowd with some international participation. But English remained the lingua franca at the meeting, and although the WFO—now comprising 100 affiliate societies in nearly as many countries—has grown to 6,500 members in its 10 years of existence, about half of these orthodontists are also AAO members. St. Louis is still the capital of the orthodontic world, but as anyone who peruses the major journals can tell, that world is increasingly multinational.

The next WFO meeting and ICO will be held in February 2010 in Sydney, Australia—another great city, where the locals all speak English and the exchange rate is friendly. American clinicians might do well to check out what their colleagues in the rest of the world are accomplishing.

DSV