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Public health – there is more to health promotion than just medical care

Awareness of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle as well as social and political factors have to be in tune. The real key to keeping people healthy is under discussion by 1,800 public health experts at the 9th European Public Health Conference held at the Austria Center Vienna from 9-12 November 2016. For conditions to improve, health issues need to play a bigger part in both day-to-day life and political decision-making processes.

A peaceful society, clean environment and healthy food

“It takes more than just good medical care to enable people to lead healthy lives – we have all known that for some time now. But this is often overlooked in day-to-day life and political decision making. More than 30 years ago, the Ottawa Charter laid out the factors necessary for improved public health. Contributory factors include **peace** and a **life without violence**, both in public and in the family. Other essential elements include access to **affordable, healthy food**, universal education – irrespective of gender, country of origin or religion – as well as a **healthy environment** and clean water. A political system that delivers a high degree of protection for all members of society, **working conditions** that are not detrimental to people’s health and a **caring family environment for children** are also among the prerequisites for a healthy population,” explained Congress president Prof. Dr. Thomas Dorner, Director of the Austrian Public Health Association.

The Vienna Declaration – the latest guidelines for improved public health

This year’s European Public Health Conference will witness the presentation of a series of recommendations 30 years after the Ottawa Charter. Brought together under the Vienna Declaration, they outline the latest guidelines for all political representatives and decision makers on how to improve public health.

Central issues facing society under discussion

The international conference at the Austria Center Vienna will present and discuss 30 successful public health projects initiated by MedUni Vienna, as well as a number of **current studies. Topics ranged from** smoking cessation, quality of life and oncological rehabilitation in Austria to increased risk-taking by SUV drivers, exercise among children and teenagers, and the impact of smartphones and tablets in the bedroom on sleep quality to the negative effects of loneliness among older people.

Health and fitness for the over-60s

As many older people live alone and only rarely leave their homes, **nutrition and exercise programmes** flanked with social support measures are a particularly effective way to prevent and reduce the incidence of frailty. MedUni Vienna's Institute for Social Medicine teamed up with Wiener Hilfswerk and Sportunion Österreich to initiate the **Healthy for Life** programme. Under the joint project, a group of trained volunteers visit frail, malnourished people (average age 83) **twice a week** in their homes to **exercise** with them (power training with elastic resistance bands) and **discuss various aspects of healthy eating**. The outcome: "There was a significant improvement in the individuals' frailty status and reduction in the risk of malnourishment, which showed that healthy eating and physical activity particularly among the elderly play a key role in health promotion in society, enhancing wellbeing and maintaining independence," Prof. Dr. Dorner concluded.

Exercise programmes integrated into the public health congress

Inspired by 'All for Health, Health for All', the scientific focus of the public health congress went beyond the purely theoretical and extended to practical applications, which included giving participants the opportunity to join in a specially-developed **sport and fitness programme**. **Qualified trainers** and a range of **indoor workout equipment** including Pilates and yoga mats, exercise bikes and resistance bands were available for delegates to use between sessions. Participants also had the chance to take part in stretching and power training sessions at the Austria Center Vienna during the lunch breaks.

Visit: <https://ephconference.eu> for further information.

The 19th scientific meeting of the Austrian Public Health Association (ÖGPH) was held in parallel under the banner of "Integrated Health – Integrated Care" (Nov 9-10). www.oeph.at

About IAKW-AG

Internationales Amtssitz- und Konferenzzentrum Wien, Aktiengesellschaft (IAKW-AG) is responsible for maintaining the Vienna International Centre (VIC) and operating the Austria Center Vienna (ACV). The Austria Center Vienna is Austria's largest conference centre, with 24 halls, 180 meeting rooms, and some 22,000sqm of exhibition space, and is one of the top players on the international conference circuit. IAKW-AG and the Austria Center Vienna are headed by Chief Executive Officer Susanne Baumann-Söllner. Visit www.acv.at for additional information.

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