

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Brian Westerberg and Fred Kozak

Dr Osler caught up with friends and colleagues, **Dr Brian Westerberg**, current IFOS Vice-President and IFOS 2021 World Congress President, and **Dr Frederick Kozak**, IFOS 2021 World Congress Vice-President and Scientific Committee Chair, to talk about their vision for the 2021 IFOS World Congress in Vancouver, Canada.



Brian Westerberg, MD, FRCS,

President, IFOS 2021; Vice President, IFOS; Clinical Professor, University of British Columbia, Canada.

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Frederick Kozak, MD, FRCS,

Vice President & Scientific Program Chair, IFOS 2021; Medical Surgical Director, Paediatric Cochlear Implant Program, BC Children's Hospital; Clinical Professor and Residency Training Director, Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery Program, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada.



Vancouver Convention Centre, where the IFOS 2021 World Congress is due to take place.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected planning for the meeting?

The pandemic has affected our planning in many ways, both professionally and personally. First and foremost, when people, patients and colleagues, around the world are faced with the devastating effects of the virus, it would have been callously inappropriate to continue with meeting arrangements. So, for the last four or five months, we asked our organising committee chairs and co-chairs to focus on looking after their patients, their families and themselves.

Given what we now know about this virus and how it is spread, if necessary, we will have measures in place to protect health and promote the safety of delegates whenever the meeting takes place. We have reserved the entire Vancouver Convention Centre to allow physical distancing. Vancouver is a city of incredible natural beauty and fresh air; the numerous outdoor patios, restaurants, and green spaces make physical distancing even easier.

We have added a special stream on pandemics and surgery, with a focus on COVID-19, to the scientific programme to examine the lessons we can learn for our specialty.

What can we expect from the IFOS 2021 World Congress in Vancouver and what are you most excited about?

Reflecting on past meetings, we realised that the most memorable were because of the speakers that touched on issues relevant to who we are as surgeons and professional members of our societies, but also on issues that may not be directly about ear or nose or throat surgery. Those are the speakers that we are excited to welcome to IFOS 2021 Vancouver.

With that in mind, we hope to explore innovative topics such as:

- **Innovation and technology:** The pandemic has shown us the value of virtual health, but we will explore how

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- **Environmental sustainability:** The Vancouver meeting was always going to be ‘green’. We will look at the environmental impact of surgery and, more importantly, what we can do as professionals and as a profession to mitigate that impact on the environment.
- **Equity and diversity:** These are critical principles for the success of any business, and it is vital for the future success and sustainability of our profession.
- **Educational principles:** How we learn and how we can better learn to capitalise on gatherings of the ENT societies that make up IFOS.
- **Physician health and wellness:** This is important for us, our families, and our patients, whether we live in North America, South America, Europe, Africa or Asia.

What might happen if the pandemic means the meeting can't take place?

As we have seen worldwide, the pandemic has caused numerous meetings to be cancelled outright or postponed. IFOS 2021 is too important of a meeting to even consider cancelling. Postponement is our only option. We are committed to hosting the World Congress of ENT in Vancouver.

What is your message for those of us planning to attend the ENT World Congress in Vancouver?

When the ENT World Congress takes place it will be your opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, share stories and learn best practices in a post pandemic world. We are committed to hosting the World congress of ENT in Vancouver when it is safe to do so.

INTERVIEWED BY



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