



### **28 YEARS OF IAMANEH**

The International Association for Maternal and Neonatal Health (IAMANEH) was founded in June 1977 in Geneva. It is a non-governmental, non-profit making organization with the purpose of improving maternal and neonatal health, especially in under-resourced countries throughout the world. It is a federation of national societies from all regions sharing this same goal.

IAMANEH distinguishes itself from most other international associations interested in women and children's health in at least two aspects: Third World problems are the main priority and membership is open to all professional groups.

Great progress has been made in maternal and neonatal health in industrialized countries where, during the 20th century, maternal death rates were reduced to a twentieth or less of their former level, and perinatal mortality decreased correspondingly. However, such dramatic improvements are not seen in most of the developing countries.

This unequal situation was the main reason why Hubert de Watteville, who was one of the founders and the first Secretary General of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), founded IAMANEH in 1977. It is intended that each National Section, as a member of IAMANEH, works for maternal and neonatal health in its own country.

IAMANEH's governing body is the General Assembly, which consists of all its members. A meeting of the General Assembly is held every three years, at the same time and place as IAMANEH's triennial International Congress on Maternal and Neonatal Health; organized by one of the National Sections. A sub-committee of the General Assembly, the Executive Board, representing the world's main regions, meets once a year, at the invitation of one of the National Sections.

IAMANEH serves non-governmental organizations, including its own National Sections. Some of the National Sections in industrialized countries support projects of less well off country sections. Support is directed preferably, but not exclusively, to primary health care at the community level. Furthermore, fellowship training is offered at clinics and larger universities in developed countries offering a variety of methods and applications in obstetrics, gynecology and perinatal medicine to candidates from developing nations.

IAMANEH supports the post-graduate training of young medical colleagues from its National Sections in reproductive medicine and reproductive biology. This six week course is held at the World Health Organization (WHO), together with the WHO Collaborating Centre in Education and Research in Human Reproduction and the WHO Department of Reproductive Health and Research. In order to successfully complete the course and obtain the Certificate in Reproductive Health Research, the students have to pass an exam, consisting of a multiple choice questionnaire and open questions, a literature review and an oral presentation, reflecting the student's knowledge about his/her chosen topic. The students are also requested to write up a research project, relevant to the setting in their country. Most candidates have successfully



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completed the course and a postgraduate course network has been established. This post-graduate course is extremely popular and there are always many more applications than scholarships.

IAMANEH also hosts a website which is being developed to provide appropriate training material to enable the national sections in poor countries to manage their own continuing education courses in maternal and newborn care for health professionals. It is hoped that national sections will use the website to share their own experiences and support each other with management protocols and other useful documentation.

Over the years IAMANEH has held eight international conferences on maternal and neonatal health - 1981 in Manila / Philippines, 1984 in Monastir / Tunisia, 1987 in Lahore / Pakistan, 1991 in Bandung / Indonesia, 1994 in Dhaka / Bangladesh, 1997 in Campinas / Brazil, 2000 in Stellenbosch / South Africa, and 2003 in Kuala Lumpur / Malaysia. The proceedings of some of these conferences were published, including a special supplement of the International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics. The 9th World IAMANEH Conference will take place during 2006 in Cairo upon the invitation by the Egyptian Society for Maternal and Neonatal Health, ESMANEH. This promises to be a most productive meeting jointly organized by IAMANEH and ESMANEH.

The vision of IAMANEH, to improve maternal and perinatal care in under-resourced countries, primarily through the support of professional training and the sharing of clinical and research experience, promises to contribute significantly to the efforts of many international organizations who strive to improve the survival of mothers and their children.

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