



Nicola Smith 0:03

Hello and welcome to the August edition of the ASCEPT newsletter. Hopefully everyone is emerging from their post-WCP fatigue. I've only just got my voice back because I was chatting to so many wonderful people from around the world. This month's edition of the newsletter has so much wonderful information.

We highlight our two new ASCEPT fellows, Professor Danijela Gnjidic and Professor Arthur Christopoulos. And we also announce and celebrate all of our new ASCEPT awardees.

There's a section on some of the EDI efforts that occurred at WCP and an update from our mentoring programme. But the important thing here is finding out what all the exciting goss was from WCP 2026. And for that, I'm joined by one of our scientific programme co-chairs, Ross McKinnon. So alongside Rebecca Ritchie, a Fellow of ASCEPT, Ross was the chair in charge of all of the scientific programme. So Ross, what were the exciting bits?



Ross McKinnon 1:09

Well, it was certainly a big week, Nicola. It's an incredibly complex meeting. And from the outside, as an attendee, you are sort of struck by the sheer number of sessions that were available to you and the breadth of those sessions. And I think actually one of the highlights of the conference was the breadth of the science being presented. You know, 56 oral sessions with six speakers per session, 32 symposia with up to sort of 6 speakers, just an incredible number of speakers. And something that I found really exciting was that we used a real sort of an approach of very diverse chairs, very diverse speakers, a lot of people chairing for the first time at a Congress, and particularly an international Congress, a lot of people speaking for the first time, and I found that a real highlight. It gave it a sort of a vibrancy that you sort of often don't see in meetings.



Nicola Smith 2:10

I agree, there was a bit of a nervous energy, but also a lot of collegiality that came from that. I noticed a lot of the chairs would introduce that it was the first time chairing of their co-chair and everyone in the room became really kind of supportive and encouraging while they were doing that for the first time.

 **Ross McKinnon** 2:27

Yeah, I think that's exactly right. And I think that had a really positive impact on the meeting. 15 plenaries or keynotes was another highlight. I thought in particular the opening and closing plenaries were both Australian, but both superb. Sharon Lewin's presentation at the opening was just incredibly exciting science and very topical. And of course, that was followed by part of an amazing opening ceremony. But I thought Glenn King's presentation on, again, some very sophisticated, exquisite science. that is obviously heading places and translating. And I think those two talks for me were two of the real highlights. I thought having a plenaries each sort of start of the day and that sort of the end of the day was also a highlight. I particularly thought the innovation theatre was a highlight and yeah, not good for me because I get claustrophobic with headphones, so I found it very difficult. But I actually, I popped into most of the sessions in the, I made a deliberate effort to try and get to as many sessions as I could through the conference. And I found the sort of the topical nature of the things that were happening in the Innovation Theatre to be another real highlight.

 **Nicola Smith** 3:26

With the with the headphones. Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant. And I found that a lot of it was, you know, straight from the horse's mouth, really current, cutting edge stuff in the Innovation Theatre, really lived up to its name. But right next to the Innovation Theatre was the posters. And I thought that once we got rid of the snake at the opening, at the welcome function, it was much more relaxed, but it was absolutely jam-packed, the poster sessions.

 **Ross McKinnon** 4:08

Yeah. It was. It worked really well, the fact that we could have the posters up for the whole meeting. And it just meant that people could sort of find the poster presenters at some point and make a time to actually sort of to be at their poster. And it worked really well. The quality of the posters was excellent.

That whole exhibition hall / posters / innovation theatre I thought worked really, really well and was an exciting part of the meeting.

 **Nicola Smith** 4:43

It's definitely the place that everyone made a beeline for and were doing all their meetups there, which was great. Final thing, highlights from the social programme. I know you and I were talking at the Congress Gala. We were not in our roaring 20s attire, but we certainly were blown away by that, but what about some of the other social events?

 **Ross McKinnon** 5:06

Yeah, as you know, I'm not a particularly social person, but I thought the dinner was absolutely amazing. The venue was absolutely amazing. Some of the ASCEPT members dressed up in a superb way. Sarah Hilmer is one that comes to mind. It really, that was a really very special venue and we did very well there. The welcome reception with the animals was a real hit. I am, yeah, I'm not great with snakes either, so I sort of avoided the snake, but again, the reception hit the spot.

 **Nicola Smith** 5:35

Unbelievable. It really did. I think there was a very disgruntled crocodile that needed to be removed early, but that koala was extraordinary. He was papped from left, right and centre.

 **Ross McKinnon** 5:50

Yeah. He was, he was a very calm koala. So, yeah, that went very well. So, I mean, overall, I just think it all worked and I think, you know, we put on a great show and I think we all can be very pleased with the way in which the meeting sort of came over.

 **Nicola Smith** 5:57

Yeah.

 **Ross McKinnon** 6:15

And, as I said, the quality of the science and, again, the scale of the meeting.

 **Nicola Smith** 6:21

I agree. Look, in my role as president of ASCEPT, I got thanked and congratulated by so many people. And of course, it wasn't me that did this. It was the Congress Leadership Group, the Local Organising Committee, the scientific chairs and International Advisory Committee who really brought all of this together.

But I think ultimately it's resulted in ASCEPT being shown the pharmacology, the education, the science and the networking and opportunities in Australasia for pharmacology just being put on centre stage. And so Carl Kirkpatrick and yourself and Rebecca have done an incredible job. Thank you very much, Ross.



Ross McKinnon 7:03

No worries, thank you.