

Trade Show Executive Med Show Alert

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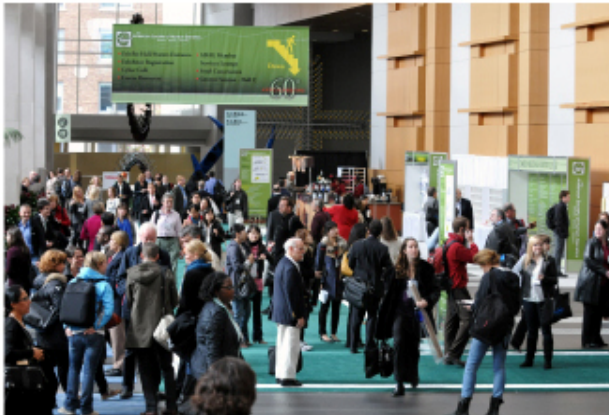
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Medical Records

New Faces a Hot Commodity at Genetics Society Meeting

By Hil Anderson, SENIOR EDITOR

Washington, DC – Drawing students and other young professionals to the annual meeting of the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) has not only been good for attendance but it has also helped the entire field.



Trainees Welcome. An aggressive outreach to trainees in the field of genetics helps ensure that up-and-coming researchers attend the ASHG Annual Meeting early and often.

A concerted outreach to “trainee” attendees helped the ASHG 60th Annual Meeting draw a record crowd last Fall. And the new faces did more than just fill up the breakout rooms and exhibit hall.

“The senior people in our association — the ones who are running laboratories or are department chairs — are the ones who are most anxious to get the best and the brightest of them into their labs,” said Joann Boughman, ASGH executive vice president.

“Our board has been focused on enhancing the trainee process for years,” Boughman told *Trade Show Executive's Med Show Alert*.

In the world of cutting-edge medical research, terms such as “trainee” and “student” don't necessarily mean anonymous undergrads on a field trip with resumes in hand. Those who are nearing the end of their training in the heady field of genetics can actually be experienced practitioners with years of rigorous post-graduate study. “They may be a post-doctoral fellow, but we allow them to be called trainees,” Boughman said. “They are people who may not be actively looking for a job but will be soon.”

Welcome Mat Rolled Out Early

The total attendance at the ASHG 60th Annual Meeting, held November 2-6 in Washington, DC, was 7,319. That included 6,008 scientific attendees from an association with a total of 7,000 members. Of the 6,008, there were 1,734 trainees rubbing elbows with exhibitors and future colleagues.

“We had about 450 to 500 more trainees compared to 2008 and 2009, which is a pretty large jump,” said Pauline Minhinett, director of meetings and exhibit manager for ASHG.

Minhinett and her staff were courting trainees from the moment the 2010 conference website went online in March. Special registration rates were offered and every e-mail blast was vetted by the conference's director of attendees to determine if it should be sent to the trainee pool or if a unique e-mail should be crafted for that particular segment.

At the meeting venue, there was a career resource center to help trainees polish their CVs, as well as a special area at the opening reception where they could meet face-to-face with senior association members and eminent scientists who were receiving awards at the meeting. “It was roped off and all of the trainees received a free drink ticket, which endeared us to them,” said Boughman. “It was one of the few events where you would see the regular members trying to get into the area for the trainees.”



Boughman

Social Media and Session Suggestions

These up-and-comers paid for their free drink in other ways. Their input was considered in post-show surveys to help the ASHG program committee in the development of the educational segment of the 2011 *International Congress of Human Genetics* in Montreal.

Trainees were also included on the committee overseeing the ASHG Annual Meeting social media effort. “We started it in 2009, but really started pushing it in 2010,” said Kristen Long, ASHG communications director and head of the social media program.

Long said more than 1,600 tweets bearing the meeting hash tag flew across Twitter over the course of the meeting. She conceded it was difficult to tell if a particular tweet had been sent out by a trainee or a regular member, but it was easy to see the attendees were eager to participate in the digital undercurrent.

Minhinett said, “One thing we are going to do for next year's meeting is target that aspect. We didn't market our hash tag and social media this year, but it really caught on and we are going to actively pursue it.”

If the active pursuit of hash tag sponsors goes as well as the courting of the trainee audience segment, another win can be chalked up for the meeting planners at ASHG.

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