

ISHA Embracing Sustainability in Meetings and Events: A Blueprint for a Greener Future

In an era where environmental consciousness is paramount, the events industry as a whole is witnessing a transformative shift towards sustainability. Sustainable meetings and events are not merely trends; they are integral to responsible business practices and societal well-being. Anecdotally, we hear of individuals making choices whether or not to attend in person meetings, or at least reducing the number of in person meetings they attend, if not totally at least in part due to the environmental impact that especially travel to international meetings has.

However, it is far from doom and gloom. We are all too aware of what we lost as a global hip preservation community when the pandemic meant we couldn't travel; the importance of the networking, the chance conversations that lead to collaboration, the ability to discuss and debate face to face and the outcomes achieved. So far from saying that to be more sustainable we won't travel, we won't hold in person meetings, we instead when evaluating need to balance the "societal benefit" that is achieved through the education, the research presentations, the relationships and collaborations formed, and think about how from an environmental perspective when ISHA are planning their in person events we can have at the core of our planning strategy the key principles, deployment of technologies, and community-driven approaches that define a sustainable event.

So, what are the key principles of sustainable meetings?

- First is the principle of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Implementing a waste reduction strategy and adopting practices that minimise environmental impact.
- Sustainable Venue Selection: Choosing venues with eco-friendly certifications, energy-efficient facilities, and a commitment to responsible resource management.
- Eco-friendly Transportation Options: Encouraging attendees to use public transport, carpool, or providing electric vehicle options.
- Mindful Catering Choices: Prioritising locally sourced, seasonal, and sustainably produced food options.

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What was different at our meeting in Cape Town and what else can you expect to see in DC this year?

When we rescheduled the Cape Town meeting from 2021 to 2023, in the process we also changed the venue to the CTICC, a venue which puts sustainability at the heart of their operation. As a venue they base their operations on the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) principles, contained in the UN sustainability goals for the year 2030, and give their commitment to the sustainability objectives by the Nurture Our World (NOW) committee.



CTICC's management of resources such as water conservation, use of energy-efficient low-emission lighting and electricity, waste management procedures and food procurement helped us as organisers to hold a more environmentally sustainable event. The venue location, close to the Waterfront area and a hub of accommodation options, also meant that we could reduce the need for transportation, whilst also being mindful of the safety needs of delegates.

When planning the Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM), simple considerations can make a big impact, such as selecting a venue that has carpeted exhibition space, using as much digital signage as possible, and where custom signage was created in Cape Town, it was fully recyclable and went off to be made into conference bags for other events in the future. Our sponsors and exhibitors using modular and reusable booths reduces waste significantly. ISHA have now integrated into the ASM hosting guidelines a section about sustainability

goals in venue and destination selection, and this is now a review criterion for the ISHA Board when selecting future meeting locations and venues.

In Cape Town we implemented a number of other waste reduction initiatives, such as:

- no single-use plastics were used by organisers;
- we worked with the venue to have a leftover food donation programme;
- recycling / repurposing initiatives meant we were able to reduce our waste generation from over 70 cubic metres to less than 2 cubic metres.

The second thing to consider is sustainable technology integration. Whilst we recognise that virtual meetings have their place – hence ISHA have continued into 2024 with their virtual education webinar and live surgery programme running through the year between in person scientific meetings – we do balance this with the value brought in meeting face to face. Our rotational pattern of hosting our annual meeting between North America, Europe and the rest of the world is done with the intent of ensuring that our annual meeting is regularly held in a location close to our main membership centres, but at the same time creating an opportunity with our rest of the world rotation taking our education to parts of the world where this knowledge share can bring great benefit and impact, after we have been!

By capturing all content from the ISHA ASM, it does enable us to offer on demand access to those who are unable or are restricted in their ability to travel, meaning they still have access to the high quality of educational content presented.

For some years now, ISHA has been using technology to reduce the amount of print and documentation created, from ePosters, to the mobile conference app, to digitally printed abstract and ICL books. Expect to see more of this in Washington this year, where we will be introducing paperless tickets and giving you an option rather than having a printed programme to use QR code scanning on site to access PDF programme content as well as the ISHA smartphone app.





It's important not to forget when we reference sustainable meetings that environmental sustainability is only one aspect of sustainability when we consider sustainability as defined under the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Another important aspect as referenced earlier in the article is the importance of societal sustainability, and by that we mean community engagement and social responsibility.

This was a key consideration when planning the Cape Town meeting as we were acutely aware that how we planned and managed the meeting could have a significant impact and provide support for those in the community locally who could most benefit. We adopted a local procurement policy which prioritised SME businesses.

Instead of having nylon delegate bags shipped in from the Far East, we used sustainably sourced cotton, and the bags were produced by a local township community. The staff T-shirts similarly were produced by local communities, and our entertainment group at the Welcome and Closing Session were a group formed to give purpose and support to youngsters who were homeless – perhaps small steps, but positive steps nonetheless.

Thinking of social responsibility and how we could use the Cape Town conference to create a positive legacy and impact that lasted after the Annual Scientific Meeting had been and gone, the spotlight was on the needs of the Africa region. You can read more about this initiative and the outcomes in Dr Chuck Cakic's article in this newsletter. The importance is to keep the momentum going, and to that end it is with great pride that since the Cape Town meeting ISHA has formed a Middle East, Africa and Turkey regional group to ensure that the needs focus and actions continue to be progressed. As a direct outcome from the Cape Town conference, we are delighted that, in partnership with Arthrex and with tremendous commitment from our members Dr Chuck Cakic and Dr Samuel Owinga, the first ISHA hip preservation training and surgical mission programme will take place in Nairobi, Kenya. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to all involved for the commitment and willingness to make this happen, which has come about through discussion and collaboration at the Cape Town meeting. Patients will directly benefit from surgery they may not otherwise have been able to access – a real CSR legacy.

Like with all initiatives, the only way that we can meaningfully understand outcomes and assess the progress being made is by creating metrics, collecting data, and evaluating this.

ISHA have signed up to the Net Zero Carbon Events Charter <https://www.netzero-carbonevents.org>, which was launched by The Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC) at COP 26 in 2022. This initiative aims to connect the events industry globally to the rapidly growing movement towards net zero events by 2050.



To help us reach this goal, ISHA has for the Washington ISHA 2024 Meeting partnered with Trees4Travel <https://www.trees4travel.com/events>, which is an award-winning environmental 'Tech For Good' company who are working with us to look at ways to reduce the carbon impact of the Annual Scientific Meeting, and where it is not possible to negate the carbon generation, measure it, because by measuring if we know what we are dealing with, we can try and neutralise this through offsetting initiatives. You will therefore see as part of the registration process this year that we will be asking you some additional questions to help us with this measurement and giving you choices that will enable you to help with our carbon reduction. You will also have the option to contribute to the carbon offsetting programme that we have put in place.

Needless to say, all of these plans can only succeed with your support and input, but we hope that as members of ISHA you feel as strongly as the ISHA leadership in making efforts to enhance our sustainability footprint.



Our meetings are just one aspect where we can try and make a difference. Many in the orthopaedic discipline are investing in sustainability studies within their clinical practice, looking into equipment being used, waste generation, and waste management as the main variables seeming to impact the carbon footprint of arthroscopic and orthopaedic surgery.

Recent publications on this topic include:

- The carbon footprint of arthroscopic procedures <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/37381779>
- Sustainability studies in orthopaedic surgery: The carbon footprint of anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction depends on graft choice <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38226676/>
- The Environmental Impact and Sustainability of Total Hip and Knee Arthroplasty <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38023654/>

This is a topic likely to be visited within this year's ISHA 2024 ASM programme in Washington DC. Whilst it's difficult for one person alone to make a significant difference, many individuals making small changes can great a huge impact.

