

CIHTCONFERENCE

11th Crikvenica International Health Tourism Conference



26th and 27th
October 2023
Crikvenica, Croatia



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WELCOME

Welcome to the 11th CIHT Conference, an international conference dedicated to health tourism! Crikvenica was one of the first destinations in Croatia where health tourism started to develop back in the 19th century. This long and important tradition has always had the same basic goals: first class healthcare services, continuous investment in quality in line with the latest trends, and the development of human resources. The awareness of the timeless importance of health and well-being is a very important part of everyday life on the Crikvenica Riviera.

The above focus bore fruit in the form of our first health tourism conference, which was held in September 2013 on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of tourism in Crikvenica. Over the past few years, the Crikvenica International Health Tourism Conference (CIHT) has become a well-known event, bringing together some of the world's foremost experts in health, tourism and business. The organisers of the Conference are the Crikvenica Tourist Board and the Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster, while Thalassotherapia Crikvenica and the Terme Selce Polyclinic are the co-organizers.

The CIHT Conference will be held this year for the eleventh time in a row, on the 26th and 27th of October 2023. The venue of the Conference is the Miramare Hotel in Crikvenica and, in addition to live attendance, it will also be broadcasted on a virtual platform.

The 2023 CIHT Conference will feature more than 15 eminent international speakers from countries all over the world. We are grateful to all of them for having set aside their time in order to share their valuable experience and knowledge with us. Most

of these speakers are also linked with the corporate sector, i.e. companies investing in and managing this field. In addition to live presentations, the CIHT Conference will provide the opportunity for networking. The priority of the Conference is the achievement of the quality of content, which also includes applicability of the shared knowledge and expertise. This year's CIHT Conference continues to contribute to current theoretical knowledge as well as practice, emphasizing the strategic importance of the development of health tourism. The CIHT Conference is gaining a greater and greater recognition in the branch. We ought to give special thanks to the long-time sponsors of the Conference, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia. Traditionally, we are supported by partners such as the Jadran Galenski Laboratory, the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, the Croatian National Tourist Board, the Kvarner Region Tourist Board, the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, and the Town of Crikvenica. We extend sincere thanks to all of them. We also thank all who participated in the organisation of this year's Conference and we are confident that CIHT 2023 will again prove the value of cooperation between health services, tourism and business, along with all the others who directly or indirectly impact this sector, thus tracing a joint path to success.

Thank you for your participation. We trust that you will enjoy the many interesting topics, educational presentations and constructive debates at this year's CIHT Conference.

Looking forward to seeing you again in 2024!

Organisers:



Crikvenica Tourist Board

Marijana Biondić, MSc.
Director



Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

Assist. Prof. Vladimir Mozetič, MD, PhD, MHA
President



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PROGRAMME

DAY ONE

Thursday, 26th of October 2023

8:30 – 9:15 Registration and welcome drink

9:30 – 10:00 Opening ceremony and welcome speeches

- **Vladimir Mozetič**, President of the Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster
- **Marijana Biondić**, Director of the Crikvenica Tourist Board
- **Damir Rukavina**, Mayor of the Town of Crikvenica
- **Irena Peršić Živadinov**, Director of the Kvarner Tourist Board
- **Zlatko Komadina**, Prefect of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County
- **Olivera Šarić**, International cooperation consultant at the Croatian National Tourist Board
- **Nikolina Brnjac**, PhD, Minister of Tourism and Sport of Republic of Croatia
- Assoc. Prof. **Vili Beroš**, MD, PhD, Minister of Health of Republic of Croatia

10:00 – 11:00

PART I

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTH TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

- Activities of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports on the development and improvement of health tourism, **Slavko Štefičar**, Director, Directorate for Sustainable Development and Competitiveness of a Tourist Destination, Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Croatia

- Activities of the Ministry of Health on the development and improvement of health tourism – new legal framework for the provision of health services in health tourism, **Danica Kramarić**, MD, Director, Directorate for Primary Health Care, Health Tourism, Medicines and Medical Products, Public Health and Public Health Care, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia

11:00 – 11:45 Coffee break and Networking

11:45 – 12:30

PART II - TOURISM AND HEALTH

Introductory Speech

HE Mr **Raj Kumar Srivastava**, Ambassador of India to Croatia

- Forest Bath – a bridge between man and nature from the perspective of KAM and health tourism, Asst.Prof. dr. mult. **Aleksandar Racz**, dr.med. spec., University of Applied Health Sciences, Zagreb, Croatia
- Panchakarma and Skin Diseases, Prof.dr. **Anandaraman Sharma**, All India Institute of Ayurveda, India
- Yoga for Health and Wellness, Dr. **Indranoshee Das**, Director, Ayush Govt. of Assam

12:30 – 13:00 PANEL DISCUSSION

- moderated by **Ivan Rendulić**, CEO RexReal| ZagrebMed

13:00 – 15:00 Lunch

15:30 – 18:00 Destination tour

Boat sightseeing of the Crikvenica Riviera

19:00

11th CIHT Dinner Party at Grand Village Estate Winery



DAY TWO

Friday, 27th of October 2023

10:00 – 11:00

PART III - CLUSTER COLABORATIONS

- The role of the Association of Slovenian Natural Spas – cooperation with regional clusters, **Iztok Altbauer**, Managing Director, Slovenian Spas Association, Slovenia
- Fostering Health Tourism: The Transformative Power of Collaboration, **Ivana Kolar** CEO & Owner, Julius Rose Business Consulting, Croatia
- European Spa Culture – New Potential for Thermal Tourism, **Simone Zagrodnik**, Executive Director, European Historic Thermal Towns Association, Germany
- The Role of Government in ensuring a Successful and Safe Medical Tourism Enterprise, **Paula Wilson**, Senior Director of Leadership, Governance & Business Risk Advisory, Vmarsh Healthcare, USA

11:00 – 11:30 PANEL DISCUSSION

- moderated by Assist. Prof. **Vladimir Mozetič**, Md, PhD, MHA President, Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break and networking

12:00 – 13:00

PART IV - TECHNOLOGIES AND HEALTH TOURISM

- Humanising Healthcare in the Digital age with Medical Travel in Perspective **Sandeep Sharma**, Executive Director & Founder, Vmarsh Healthcare, UAE
- The application of AI for business improving of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs in the health tourism field, Sc. **Damir Medved**, EDIH Adria, Croatia
- Innovative Health Technologies and the Role of Human Technology Styria Cluster, **Lejla Pock**, CEO, Styrian Human Technology Cluster, Austria
- Microplastics – Rising tide of health concerns, **Joško Brkić**, Global Brand Manager for Aqua Maris, Jadran Galenski Laboratory

13:00 – 13:30 PANEL DISCUSSION

- moderated by **Ognjen Bagatin**, Owner & CEO, Polyclinic Sinteza

13:30 – 14:30 Lunch

15:00

Destination tour

Health Institutions Tour at Thalassotherapia Crikvenica & Terme Selce





Slavko Štefičar

DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS OF A TOURIST DESTINATION, MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND SPORT

Slavko Štefičar, Director of the Directorate for Sustainable Development and Competitiveness of a Tourist Destination, is an expert specialist in project management and is currently attending the doctoral study of Business Economics at the Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences, Novo mesto (Slovenia). The Directorate is responsible for designing and implementing measures for the sustainable development of tourist destinations, coordinating the activities of stakeholders in the process of tourist destination development, especially the development of public tourist infrastructure. The scope of the Administration includes the development of special forms of tourism as well as the implementation of activities aimed at climate change mitigation and energy efficiency in the part related to tourism.

Presentation title:

Activities of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports on the development and improvement of health tourism



Danica Kramarić

DIRECTOR, DIRECTORATE FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, HEALTH TOURISM, MEDICINES AND MEDICAL PRODUCTS, PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC HEALTH CARE, MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

She is Director of the Directorate for Primary Health Care, Health Tourism, Medicines and Medical Products, Public Health and Public Health Care at Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia and expert specialist in the organization of health care and expert specialist in project management. The Directorate is responsible for primary health care, health tourism, medicines and medical products, public health and public health protection performs tasks related to: improvement of the system health care; determination of state health policy proposals; professional and administrative jobs related to health care and health insurance in the field of health care at the level of primary health care and public health, at the level of state institutes and agencies at in the field of public health activities, telemedicine, medicines and medical products, emergency medicine, occupational health protection and anti-doping; professional jobs related to spas tourism, medical tourism and medical wellness and generally for health services in tourism; monitors the health needs of the population and improves the organization of the health care system; follow and studies the conditions in the health care system and takes measures for efficiency and quality performance of activities; monitors the development and proposes measures to improve the system of primary, specialist-advisory and health care at the level of state health institutes, agencies and institutes at the county level; improves and monitors the implementation of preventive measures public health programs, national strategies and action plans; improves activities in the area of population health protection; proposes programs to improve health and improving the quality of life of people from vulnerable groups; participates in the preparation and coordinating the implementation of programs and community projects for the health of the European Union.

Presentation title:

Activities of the Ministry of Health on the development and improvement of health tourism - new legal framework for the provision of health services in health tourism

The global trend of traveling for health has influenced the development of health tourism in Croatia, which is traditionally a health tourism destination in this part of Europe. Considering the significant comparative advantages of Croatia for the development of health tourism, which primarily include the provision of health services at a high level, professional and qualified staff, natural beauty and a favorable climate, a long tradition in tourism, high security of the country and competitive prices, health tourism is a product with high growth potential. This presentation will provide an overview of all the activities of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Croatia on the development and improvement of health tourism in Croatia.





Aleksandar Racz

University of Applied Health Sciences

Assoc. prof. Aleksandar Racz, MD is a physician specializing in health ecology, currently engaged in three scientific fields – biomedicine, health and social sciences and economics. He completed four post-graduate studies and obtained four doctorates from different universities, in the fields of social science, economics, social work and biomedical sciences. His main foci of scientific interest are global public health, health ecology and environmental ethics, the application of KAM methods and techniques in medicine, and health and wellness tourism. In recent years, through the Power of the Forest Platform, he has taken up the promotion of the complementary Eastern method Shinrih – Yoku (Jung Forest bath / Forest Therapy / Forest Medicine), which he tries to implement in the health and tourism sector respecting the scientific, evidence-based medicine.

Presentation title: “Forest bath” – a Bridge Between Man and Nature from the Perspective of KAM and Health Tourism

The concept of *Shinrin-yoku (SY)* or *forest bath* was developed by the Japanese Forestry Agency in 1982 as a method from the spectrum of KAM, which is based on the conscious engagement of slow, multisensory, immersive experiences during guided movement through certified forest trails with the aim of mitigating technologic stress and improving mental and physical balance. Fifty years ago, SY spread across Korea, Europe (primarily Germany, Great Britain, Slovenia and Italy), to the USA, and in some countries, it found its place through the so-called *green and social prescriptions* in different national health systems (Scotland, England, Australia, etc.). The presentation will present the theoretical foundations, historical development and current application of this approach in health tourism. The emphasis now is on Croatia, and its obvious potential for the development of SY. Discussions will be held on the possibility of applying “forest therapy” as an integral part of public health prevention. It is logical to see its place within the medical rehabilitation programmes, and related to health tourism. This has already been recognized in the municipality of Radoboj, where in September 2023 the first certified forest path for SY was laid out. This initiative is already recognized within the health tourism offer of green Croatia.



Anandaraman Sharma

Medical Superintendent & Head of the Department of Panchakarma, All India Institute of Ayurveda

Prof. Dr. Anandaraman Sharma P.V. is an Ayurveda Physician renowned for his contributions to the practice, research, and promotion of traditional Indian medicine. As a medical practitioner with an M.D. in Panchakarma and a Ph.D., he holds the position of Medical Superintendent and Head of the Department of Panchakarma at the prestigious All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India. With over two decades of experience, Dr. Anandaraman is renowned for his profound expertise in Ayurveda, particularly in the domain of Panchakarma. His practical knowledge encompasses all the Shodhana Procedures, making him an authority in this field. Driven by a passion for dermatological care through Ayurveda, he achieved demonstrated success in managing various skin conditions using the traditional Indian medicine. A profound believer in transdisciplinary research, Dr. Anandaraman's work extends beyond traditional boundaries. His interest in biomedical instrumentation for Ayurveda led to the development of innovative tools, including the groundbreaking *Portable Shirodhara Instrument*. Apart from his academic and research pursuits, Dr. Anandaraman is committed to promoting scientific practices in Shodhana Chikitsa and Keralaeya Kriya Krama. He conducts intensive Panchakarma workshops to impart hands-on experience to practitioners and carrier physicians. Dr. Anandaraman is the author of a book titled *Shodhaniya Siddhi* and contributed chapters in other books on Ayurveda. He has published 40 papers in national and international peer-reviewed Indexed journals.

Presentation title: Panchakarma and Skin Diseases

How Ayurveda is relevant in treating skin disease and what is its holistic approach to healthcare? The presentation will outline the Ayurvedic principles, specifically the role of digestion for skin health and conditions. Eczema, psoriasis, acne, urticaria are common skin diseases but they can be cured with Panchakarma herbal remedies and formulations, along with modifications of lifestyle and dietary discipline. The value of Ayurveda's holistic approach will be shown through a comparative analysis of Ayurvedic vs. conventional medical approaches.





Iztok Altbauer

Managing Director, Slovenian Spas Association

Iztok was appointed to the position as the Managing Director at the Slovenian Spas Association (SSA) 15 years ago, after he had spent almost 25 years in the tourism business. Before this position, he was the CEO of Globtour, one of the leading Slovenian Tour Operators at that time. For several years he held the position of the manager of sales and marketing in the Slovenian Tourist Board. He founded the Slovenian Incoming Workshop in 1997, recognized still today as the leading tourism incoming event in Slovenia. Iztok established strong connections to the spa, health and wellness industry in the region, having given numerous presentations and run numerous events. He is a regular speaker at various conferences. In 2017, he was one of the speakers at the ITB Experts Forum Wellness. One of the most important projects that he established and has been running for 13 years now, is the B2B event called *SPA-CE Experience* – Specialized Workshop and Meeting place of Spa & Wellness Industry in Central Europe. This is the first and only business event of its kind in Central Europe. During the 60th celebration of the Slovenian Spas Association, Iztok organized a European Conference – ENSPA (European Natural Spa & Wellness Conference) that gathered the world's leading associations in the field of balneology, hydrology, spa and wellness business, such as FEMTEC, ESPA, ISMH, OMTH and the prestigious GWI (Global Wellness Institute). He is also a participating member of the Hot Spring Initiative within the GWI. During Iztok's position in the Slovenian Spas Association, this organization joined the ESPA (European Spas Association), where Iztok is responsible for the marketing & sales activities.

Presentation title: The role of the Association of Slovenian Natural Spas – Cooperation with Regional Clusters

The Community of Slovenian Natural Spas (SSNZ) unites 13 natural and thermal spas that operate under the common name *Slovenian Natural Spas*. It works as a strategically and operationally oriented organization for tourism marketing and supports the business interests of its members and health tourism in Slovenian spas and health resorts in general. Specifically, this activity enables them to be included in Slovenia's public health network. Slovenian natural spas pay a special attention to new trends and programmes for maintaining and boosting health and well-being. Some of the new trends appearing here, and exemplified in European tourism are the philosophy of healthy lifestyles and a balance of body and mind. This tourist segment is the strongest and most competitive one in Slovenia, as a quarter of all overnight stays in Slovenia are spent in spas and health resorts.



Ivana Kolar

CEO and owner, Julius Rose Business Consulting

As the CEO and owner of Julius Rose Business Consulting Ivana has a rich expertise in the creation and implementation of business strategies, planning and development of wellness and thermal spas, market positioning, change management and investment projects. She was the organizer of the International Strategic Conference TOURISM 365 on the Trends and Future of Tourism and is the director of the European HTI Summit. She actively participates in professional associations and promotes health tourism. She is also currently the President of Health tourism Association at the Croatian Chamber of Economy, but is primarily engaged as lecturer, conference speaker and author of articles on tourism. She held the position of the CEO at Terme Tuhelj, the largest thermal and spa resort in Croatia, and is still a Management Board Advisor for business development in that spa. She is the author of a unique Art&Spa platform for hotels. With a rich career behind her, she played a significant role in fostering the development of thermal and wellness tourism in Croatia.

Presentation title: Fostering Health Tourism: The Transformative Power of Collaboration.

The title *Fostering Health Tourism: The Transformative Power of Collaboration* underscores the pivotal role of cooperation in advancing health tourism. Health Tourism Association at the Croatian Chamber of Commerce unites the national healthcare providers, hospitality industries and government bodies to explore the huge potential of developing health tourism in Croatia. Through the exchange of experiences, knowledge and ideas and by fostering alliances, we can collectively transform this sector, offering superior healthcare service and wellness experience to global travellers.





Simone Zagrodnik

Executive Director, European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA)

Simone studied business and tourism at the Cologne Business School (Cologne, Germany), graduating in 2002. With a specialisation in destination marketing and incoming tourism, she worked for tour operators and companies in Thailand and Germany. In 2005 Simone started her job as tourism marketing manager in the German town of Wiesbaden, also known as the *World Spa City of the 19th Century*. As head of marketing and deputy managing director with the Wiesbaden Congress & Marketing GmbH from 2008 to 2020, she gained additional experience in both health and cultural tourism, discovering at the same time her enthusiasm for the thermal heritage and spa towns in Europe. After having engaged and participated in the development of the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA) from a members' perspective for almost a decade, Simone was appointed to the post of the executive director of the EHTTA in 2020. Certified as Cultural Route of the Council of Europe, EHTTA liaises with various European and International associations and networks promoting its transnational European tourism product with the winning combination of culture, heritage, wellbeing and health. As an Affiliate Member of UNWTO, EHTTA has organized the International Congress on Thermal Tourism in 2022 and 2023 with the goal to raise the awareness for thermal tourism on a global level.

Presentation title: European Spa Culture – New Potential for Thermal Tourism

In the past two years the European Historic Thermal Towns Association (EHTTA) has successfully enhanced its promotion activities to increase its visibility and market spa towns in Europe as destinations of wellbeing and health, culture and history. The rising demand and opportunities for thermal tourism can be observed not only in Europe, but all over the world. With the support of UNWTO, the Association has organized the International Congress on Thermal Tourism, with the goal of placing this specific type and niche tourism on the global agenda.

Paula Wilson

Senior Director of Financial Governance & Business Risk Advisory, Vmarsh Healthcare

Paula Wilson is an experienced leader, manager and educator in the health care, higher education, and government sectors. Most recently, Ms. Wilson served as the President and Chief Executive officer of Joint Commission Resources/Joint Commission International, a global patient safety and health care quality organization. Her career began in the New York State Government where she served on the Governor's staff, was the Deputy Budget Director for Health, Education and Welfare and served as the Executive Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Health Department. Ms. Wilson has held various senior positions in the health care sector including that of CEO of two managed care organizations, namely as Senior Vice President of Corporate Programmes at a multi-service long-term care organization and Vice President for Policy at the United Hospital Fund. She has served on the Boards of the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation, the largest public hospital system in the United States, The Visiting Nurse Association of Brooklyn and St. Mary's Center, Inc., a community based long term care and primary care provider in New York City. She has extensive governance experience serving on and working with organization boards. Ms. Wilson was an Associate Professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University teaching courses in financial management for public and nonprofit organizations and was an Associate Clinical Professor at the Robert F. Wager Graduate School of Public Service at New York University.

Presentation title: The Role of Government in Ensuring a Successful and Safe Medical Tourism Enterprise

As medical tourism continues to grow in all parts of the world, there is an increasing need for governments to play an expanded role in ensuring that international patients receive safe and appropriate health care services. This presentation will provide an overview of how some public agencies are contributing to the quality of care of international patients and opportunities to enhance the role of government going forward.





Sandeep Sharma

Executive Director & Founder, Vmarsh Healthcare

Sandeep Sharma is the Executive Director & Founder of Vmarsh Healthcare, a consulting firm focused on healthcare strategy, quality/performance improvement & transaction advisory services. Vmarsh operates through offices across Dubai, Chicago, Kuala Lumpur, Cairo & Mumbai as well as through 11 partner offices across Europe and Central/South Americas. In addition, Sandeep is a member of the Board and Chairman of the Strategy Committee for the European Fertility Society. Also, he is an Advisory Board Member for the Standards Committee for Global Healthcare Accreditation in the USA. Sandeep has led multiple business advisory, expansion strategy, operational/clinical excellence & transformation projects, and also filled business leadership roles across six continents. He holds an MBA in marketing from Sydney, Australia and is a graduate in biotechnology from India. He lived and was educated in the UK, India, Singapore, Australia, now residing in the UAE.

Presentation title: Humanising Healthcare in the Digital Age with Medical Travel in Perspective

While on a daily basis we hear about the advancement of AI/robotics/big data, technologies leaping ahead and breaking barriers in medicine and healthcare, one must take a moment to reflect on retaining the *humane* factor in healthcare. After all the *human touch* and *nurturing* are themselves bestowed with powers in the process of healing. Whether you are regulator in a government entity, a health provider (hospital or clinic) or work as a C-suite, clinician, nurse, admin or ground staff, or are associated with medical travel and wellness fields, either way, you have an imperative for possessing humane empathy for patients/medical tourists, customers and/or stakeholders. In my presentation I will focus on how different stakeholders within the healthcare, wellness or medical travel industry play a forefront role in balancing the use of new technologies and advancements to boost organisational development/growth in their companies, while at the same time maintaining sight of the *humane* factor, so as to create a true and satisfactory patient outcome and experience.



Damir Medved

Technical Coordinator of the Competence Centre for Smart Cities Rijeka

Damir Medved, M.Sc. has more than 30 years of experience in leading complex transformation projects in the corporate and public sector. His specialty is the launching of Smart cities and regions, especially strategic planning, but also the introduction of advanced technologies (such as the practical application of AI, IoT, Blockchain) in city planning and the design of concrete solutions (digital twins, urban simulations, etc.). He is the initiator and technical coordinator of the Competence Centre for Smart Cities in Rijeka, and is currently leading the EDIH Adria project at the University of Rijeka, intended to help small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, local self-government units and public companies in the application of the latest technologies such as AI and HPC in their business.

Presentation title: Application of Artificial Intelligence to Improve the Business of Small and Medium-sized Entrepreneurs in the Domain of Health Tourism

Can artificial intelligence and high-performance computing help create new services in health tourism? Are entrepreneurs ready to deploy advanced chatbots, sensor infrastructure or big data analytics? How far (or how close) is the application of AI for health tourism in our environment and how can EDIH ADRIA help in this respect?





Lejla Pock

CEO, Styrian Human Technology Cluster

Lejla Pock, the CEO and the visionary behind the Styrian Human Technology Cluster, is an ardent advocate for the industry. As a partner at Austin, Pock + Partners, a renowned technology consultancy, she has led a number of groundbreaking cluster initiatives. Her multiple roles as an entrepreneur, startup pioneer and consultant highlight her deep expertise in the field. Since moving to Graz in 1993, the Croatian-born entrepreneur has become an integral part of the dynamic heart of the Styrian capital.

Presentation title: Innovative Health Technologies and the Role of Human Technology Styria Cluster

This lecture delves into the powerful synergy between health technologies and the influential role of companies within the Human Technology Styria Cluster. Exploring breakthroughs like telemedicine, AI diagnostics, and wearable health tech, it showcases their potential to revolutionize personalized care and patient outcomes. The lecture emphasizes how companies in the Human Technology Styria Cluster are driving these advancements, thus creating opportunities for growth and collaboration. The presentation will offer those professionals seeking to navigate this transformative landscape valuable insights into the pivotal role of the Human Technology Styria Cluster in shaping the future of healthcare.

Joško Brkić

Global brand manager for Aqua Maris, Jadran Galenski Laboratory

JGL is a Croatian pharmaceutical company based in Rijeka with a significant and growing international presence. The leading brand within the JGL portfolio is Aqua Maris.

Before joining JGL as global brand manager for Aqua Maris, Joško has been actively involved in the world of marketing and management for the past 15 years, and has a rich experience working both on the agency side of the business in a leading marketing agency and on the client side for a multinational corporation.

Presentation title: Microplastics – Rising Tide of Health Concerns

Having become a global phenomenon, present in all aspects and stages of human life, microplastics are most likely here to stay. As studies about the health risks of exposure to microplastics grow each year in both volume and significance, we need to find a way how to protect ourselves from the threat presented by microplastics. The presentation will focus on the efforts undertaken in Croatia to raise awareness and educate the public about this issue and on the immediate solutions which are available.



MODERATORS



Ivan Rendulić

CEO RexReal|ZagrebMed

Ivan Rendulić is the founder of the ZagrebMed project, a digital platform for health tourism in the city of Zagreb. With support from the Zagreb Tourist Board, the City of Zagreb, and the Croatian Chamber of Commerce and through the partnership with Croatia Airlines and Obzor Holidays, Ivan is active in promoting health tourism in the region. Besides his entrepreneurial pursuits, Ivan is also a dedicated member of the Croatian kendo national team. In his leisure time, he enjoys playing golf. Ivan's primary focus lies in the realm of health tourism and international collaboration within the healthcare sector.



Vladimir Mozetić

President, Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

Assist. Prof. Vladimir Mozetić, MD, PhD, has been the president of the Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster since 2014. He graduated from the Medical Faculty of the University in Rijeka and worked at the Department of Urology, University Hospital Centre Rijeka. Later on, he was employed in the private Medico Special Hospital in Rijeka, where he was appointed director (2008-2016). From 2017 to 2022 he was a director and a urologist at the Community Health Centre of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. Dr. Mozetić is now a consultant urologist, and also a lecturer on several faculties on the topics of healthcare management and urology.

He is also a vice-president of the Association of Health Tourism at the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, member of the European Urological Association, member of the Governing Board of the Croatian Society of Urology, member of the Governing Board of the Croatian Association of Business Ethics and Health Economy, member of the Board for Private Practice and Contracted Outpatient Specialistic Branches in the Croatian Medical Association, member of the Advisory Council of the ACAP Medical Tourism Task Forces and member of the Advisory Board on the EDIH-Adria Project. In addition, he participates in the working groups within the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism and Sports dealing with healthcare, health industry and health tourism.



Ognjen Bagatin

Owner & CEO, Polyclinic Sinteza

Ognjen Bagatin, owner and CEO of the Polyclinic Sinteza for otorhinolaryngology, aesthetic surgery and medicine, gynecology and speech therapy which is part of Futura Medical Group, is also a co-owner of the Bagatin Clinic, a private clinic for aesthetic surgery, dentistry, dermatology and cosmetology, and a co-owner of the Poduzetnik media platform for entrepreneurs. In addition, he is a consultant for about 20 clinics in Europe in the field of health management and health tourism, aesthetic surgery and aesthetic medicine and dentistry. He is also in advisory board of fast growing aesthetic medical group Cronos Med in Romania. He is an active member of the Executive Boards and Councils related to the development of medical tourism in Croatia, where there is great potential (Council for Medical Tourism at the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, Executive Board for Health in HUP).

Interview with Vladimir Mozetič, president of the Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster

The Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster joined CIHT in 2015, meaning that almost a decade of CIHT conferences is behind you. Why did the Cluster join in the CIHT organization and are you satisfied with the results?

The decision of the Management Board in 2015 led to the inclusion of the Cluster in the CIHT conference and it was a very good decision. I am proud of such a deep involvement of our organization in the Conference. For almost 10 years, experts from around 20 countries from four continents took part at the conference, transferring to the listeners year by year new knowledge and trends in the organization and the content of the service programme in health tourism. In addition to this exchange of knowledge, a very important area in the development of the Conference was the creation and maintenance of a network facilitating the continuity of business cooperation. This was confirmed to us through a large number of active projects involving our participants. Over the years, we performed an *extended* introduction to the region in the sense of documenting more thoroughly the touristic, cultural, gastronomical and oenological qualities of the region.

For those not familiar with the work of the Cluster, can you explain in more detail what is the Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster?

The Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster is an independent association founded in November 2014 that brings together members from the health sector (medical and dental), the health industry (pharmaceutical companies), the tourism sector (tourist associations, agencies, hotel groups) and the scientific and teaching fields (various faculties of the University of Rijeka). Currently, the Cluster has 41 members and is run by a team of two employees. The members of the Cluster come from both the private and the public sector. I believe that the main reason for our creation and establishment is that we in the Kvarner Bay and in the entire county, being true to a tradition of over 180 years, realized in a timely manner that an association of participants in health tourism (health, health industry, tourism, science and education) can bring benefits to everyone in this field, such as higher-quality organization, more economical approach and a long-term investment. Most institutions have been continuously and significantly investing in personnel training, equipment and premises for a number of years, as well as in the promotion of their own services on the markets. The Cluster's offer includes the organization of the arrival, accommodation, health services, but also local cultural, gastronomic and outdoor activities.

What makes the Kvarner region so interesting? As we know, it is thankful for all the initiatives springing up in the field of health tourism.

We often use the saying that *A week of stay in Kvarner*

prolongs life by a year.

The name Kvarner comes from the Latin word

Quaternarius/

Quadrangle,

which means

a region

that has

mountains

and a hilly

region (Gorski

kotar) in the

north, the Istrian

peninsula in the west,

a long sea coast in the

east, and islands in the south. This

area blends into a uniquely healthy microclimate,

utilizing the natural healing factors which were

recognized already in the first half of the 19th century.

Therefore, the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County and the

entire region can be seen as a cradle of the so-called

blue but also of *green* tourism and we will do our best for

it to remain so.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities for health tourism here in Croatia?

Given that health tourism is included in national and regional strategic plans, its gradual development was expected. Health tourism is currently one of the guidelines for the overall development of tourism and has become an integral part of it. Also, investments in personnel, space and equipment, as well as in marketing and sales, have made it possible to talk about health tourism as one of the most vital economic branches in the tourist domain. The interaction of all stakeholders in the health industry and health tourism, meaning the private and the public sector, is proving to be a fruitful model for cooperation, based on the fact that the investment in health industry boosts in an almost linear way the quality of life and the availability of services for the entire public.



Interview with Marijana Biondić, director of the Crikvenica Tourist Board, initiator of the CIHT Conference

The reputation of the Crikvenica Riviera is excellent. Is this related to health tourism? Why exactly is the Crikvenica Riviera the host of the Crikvenica International Health Tourism Conference (CIHT), a conference on health tourism?

The historical roots of health and healing activities in Crikvenica go all the way back to the Pauline monks, who studied medicine and pharmacy in the monastery in Crikvenica in the 15th century, grew medicinal plants and converted part of the monastery into a shelter and hospital for their sick brothers, pilgrims, the poor and others patients. The Riviera is also blessed with natural healing factors: a very healthy and mild Mediterranean climate and microclimate, clean air and sea, and distinctive natural beauty which was already recognized in the 19th century as a good basis for tourism development, and since then more and more has been written about Crikvenica as a climatic spa and bathing resort in both Croatian and international publications.

The first guests started coming to Crikvenica in an organized manner due to the proven healing properties of sea water, so it is precisely the long tradition of health tourism on our Riviera that is the main ground for its reputation. The term tradition refers to climatic and marine natural healing factors, but also to health infrastructure, which comprises health facilities, weather stations, pedestrian and bicycle paths. Crikvenica has quality health institutions with a long tradition, such as the Crikvenica Thalassotherapy, which, among other things, is specialized in the treatment of the upper and lower respiratory tract diseases and the diseases of the locomotor system.

The other renowned health establishments are the Oxy Baromedicine Centre and the Terme Selce who provide numerous therapeutic and preventive programmes in the field of physical medicine and rehabilitation of sports injuries. The Katunar Polyclinic offers a number of high-quality specialist services in a pleasant environment and prides itself of excellent cooperation with numerous medical institutions.

This year, for the first time, the Conference will take place in the Miramare Hotel in Crikvenica, which itself has a history related to health tourism. Namely, since 1906, the hotel has had a spa with cold and warm sea water, all kinds of physical and hydrotherapy, massages, inhalations, radioactive sea baths...



In the ten years of its existence, the CIHT Conference has grown into a respectable gathering of the most important representatives from the field of health tourism, both domestic and international. This year, the 11th Conference awaits us, and what do the numbers say about the Conference and its ten years?

We started the organization of CIHT in 2013, on the occasion of marking 125 years of organized tourism, in cooperation with the Crikvenica Thalassotherapy, primarily for two basic reasons. Firstly, we wanted to draw attention to and raise awareness of the importance of the potentials of the Crikvenica Riviera as a health destination with numerous comparative advantages, medicinal factors of nature and excellent health services. Secondly, to encourage the most intensive and high-quality connection of stakeholders within this destination, especially the health care institutions operating in connection with tourism.

We are very pleased that the Conference is growing from year to year – in terms of quality, quantity and organization. Over the years, it has introduced new contents such as business workshops, B2B meetings and networking, a study tour of health institutions, and it has grown to become a full two-day international event.

Since 2015, the Health Tourism Cluster of Kvarner has joined the organization of the Conference, along with Crikvenica Thalassotherapy which was part of the organization since the beginning, and Terme Selce which has been participating since 2019.

Last year, the tenth CIHT jubilee was celebrated, and on that occasion, we remembered the CIHT Conference in numbers. So far, there have been 111 lecturers, 1364 participants from 76 countries, 44 sponsors and partners, and after this year's Conference, these numbers will be even higher.

The importance of CIHT is also recognized by two Croatian government ministries - the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the Ministry of Health. They have supported us for many years, and this year they acknowledged again the status of the conference as a highly important one both for Croatia and the international audience.

What would you single out as CIHT's formula for success?

Most certainly, it is a combination of several factors. First of all, there is a combination of interdisciplinarity, expertise, knowledge, renowned lecturers from all over the world and relevant and current topics. Then, there is

the excellent cooperation and joint activities of all partners in the project. We are proud of our continuing communication with lecturers from previous conferences, who have become promoters and ambassadors of CIHT, as well as of Croatia as a health tourism destination.

And finally - what does the Crikvenica Riviera offer its guests in terms of improving their lifestyle?

Regardless of whether our guests are on the Riviera for a day or longer, we want them to feel welcome, comfortable and safe. We try to follow trends and adapt the offer to various types of guests. In addition to the usual forms of recreation like hiking and biking trails, activities and sports on land and sea, the wellness and treatment offer in our hotels, along with the healing factors of the nature are our valuable resources. Not to mention the rich tradition of our entire region, which we try to revive through our events and projects. Here I wish to mention the Bluefish Road project, a year-round offer of dishes made from bluefish, traditional in our region, offered by selected restaurants on the Riviera. In this initiative, we managed to connect fishing, gastronomy and health. Then, we have a whole month dedicated to the plavuša species of bluefish, and finally the Crikvenica Experience Project which promotes outdoor activities on the Crikvenica Riviera. In all, we believe that we succeeded in creating a specific blend of relaxing wellness programmes and special gastronomic offers, which can be packaged as a marketable tourist product.

In any case, Crikvenica will continue to strengthen and develop the health branch of tourism, for which we have had predispositions for more than a century, and one which is able to attract clients at any time of the year.





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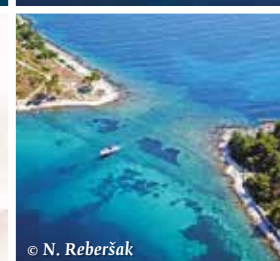
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Organisers



CRIKVENICA TOURIST BOARD

Crikvenica Tourist Board includes a central Tourist Office and four Tourist Information Centres in coastal towns on the Crikvenica Riviera: in Crikvenica, Dramalj, Jadranovo and Selce. Its basic vision and mission is to constantly invest in quality and to effectively connect the existing services and facilities on the Riviera with the aim of increasing the number of visitors and their level of satisfaction. Other objectives include the creation of new interesting services, activities, destination brands and marketing strategies in order to make the Crikvenica Riviera recognisable on the market as a desirable destination for leisure, entertainment, relaxation, sport and recreation.

When developing new activities and raising the quality of existing ones, Crikvenica Tourist Board follows global trends while at the same respecting local traditions and including the typical features of the destination. It has extensive experience in developing various projects and organising numerous cultural, entertainment, traditional, culinary, sporting, recreational, and other events. Crikvenica Tourist Board is also in charge of numerous promotional activities, such as the production of various digital and print materials, offline and online advertising on Croatian and foreign markets, targeted destination promotions in the most significant source markets (fairs, presentations), and inviting study groups of journalists and agents.

Crikvenica Tourist Board also coordinates activities in the destination and cooperates with all entities whose business is directly or indirectly related to tourism. Offering a unique and unforgettable experience is the basic guideline when creating projects. Crikvenica Tourist Board seeks to inspire visitors to participate actively in events by organising fishing or sailing events, bocce tournaments or the cooking of traditional dishes in the company of their hosts. These efforts and innovation have been recognised at the international level: in 2014 the 'Creative Tourism Network' declared Crikvenica Tourist Board the world's most creative destination. The basic criterion for this was the fact that visitors are involved in the life of the local community.

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KVARNER
HEALTH

KVARNER HEALTH TOURISM CLUSTER

Kvarner Health Tourism Cluster gathers members from medical, touristic and university sector, as well as accompanying services with the goal of creating a recognizable and competitive health tourism product on the local and international level. Our organization implies preparations and placements of the recognizable and competitive health tourism product which must follow the world trends, tradition, resource base and specific features of the destination. We are directed towards strengthening and development of health tourism on Kvarner, in accordance with the strategic documents which define the destination as "the destination of health".

The Cluster operates systematically and actively on stimulating synergic processes, directed towards improving the range and quality of the overall health tourism offer of Kvarner as the destination of health, through joint placement of services on the health tourism market, for the purpose of raising the degree of capacity use and overall prosperity of the Kvarner tourist destination as a whole.

Kvarner, as a tourist destination, is positioned among the leading "destinations of health" on the European map, and even wider. We are recognizable for our year-round offer of high-quality services in health tourism, based on contemporary trends, resource base and tradition.

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Co-organisers



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ABOUT THE DESTINATION

CRIKVENICA RIVIERA

The Crikvenica Riviera is situated in one of the most picturesque corners of Kvarner and it comprises the charming tourist resorts of Crikvenica, Dramalj, Jadranovo and Selce.

Due to its favourable natural features, this riviera began to nurture a tradition of health tourism as early as the 19th century. The area's mild and healthy climate, microclimate, clean air and sea, as well as its favourable insolation and vegetation, all help in the prevention of various diseases, rehabilitation, and improvement of the quality of life. If you are looking for a destination where in the same day you can swim in the sea, stroll on a sandy beach breathing in the scents of the Mediterranean, and then in the evening have fun in town, or relax in the quiet of a green hinterland, then this is the right choice for you.

Crikvenica is a destination that has always had excellent natural conditions for the development of health tourism in the area. Beside all this, in nowadays there are also top experts in respectable institutions: Special Hospital for Medical Rehabilitation of Respiratory and Locomotor System Diseases "Thalassotherapie Crikvenica", Polyclinic „Terme Selce“, Polyclinic „Katunar“, Polyclinic for hyperbaric medicine "OXY" and other various specialist services.

It's always interesting here with more than 250 different events throughout the year, such as the Carnival, Experience Crikvenica Gastro, Health & Outdoor (spring and autumn edition), Strawberry Festival, Na palade - music festival, (Sr)etno Selce ethno festival, CrikvArt - street entertainers festival, Moja mala kala, the Melodies with a Taste of the Sea festival, other music and sports festivals, Šilo-Crikvenica swimming marathon, the Tourism Days, Oily Fish Month or the Fisherman's Week.

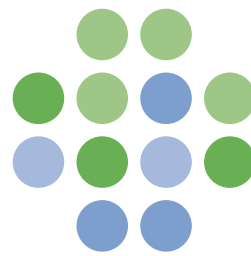
The Crikvenica-Vinodol region has a total of more than 300 km of footpaths and hiking trails and 420 km of cycling trails. This is the perfect place for enjoying walks, jogging, cycling and virtually

all other sport activities on land or in the sea. In Crikvenica you can simply take a walk along one of the most beautiful sandy beaches on the Adriatic, the gorgeous Love Path or through the fragrant Mediterranean Labyrinth of Love.

The traditional gastronomy exudes the Mediterranean, and is rich in fish, seafood, vegetables, olive oil, natural aromatic herbs and other healthy ingredients. Some of the restaurants and hotels marked The Oily Fish Route offer specially prepared tasty dishes of blue fish on their menus and this is based on the famous tradition of fishing.

Accommodation is available in hotels, private accommodation, campsites, hostels and other types of accommodation (total capacity - more than 25.200 beds).

And remember, this home to beautiful natural scenery and a rich cultural and historical heritage is ideal for all generations of visitors, from adventurers and animal lovers to families and those looking for entertainment, excitement and relaxation in the great outdoors.



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