

A moment with Michael

ITIJ sat down for a cup of coffee with Michael Weinlich to catch up and find out what he has been up to recently

ITIJ: Do you have a favourite holiday destination?

MW: No – Actually I prefer to take in different destination to find variety and find new impressions, meeting new types of people. Every country has its own speciality and charm, so no favourite. I do a lot of travel in general, some for work, but I have lived in Tokyo and the US for school. I really like to move around and experience life and get different impressions.

ITIJ: How often do you travel for work?

MW: Once or twice a month I am abroad, usually in Europe. As business travellers see so many nice places, chill out destinations for holiday are more and more preferred. Our last destination was Tuscany in Italy, enjoying the perfect landscape, good food, red wine and some sports next to extensive relaxation.

ITIJ: What's the worst job you've ever done?

MW: I think I've been very lucky and all the jobs I have had have been challenging, but about 20

years ago probably my least favourite job was doing presentations – I used to get very nervous before speaking at a conference or even just a business presentation – I even had an increased heart rate three days before the meeting! Once I was doing a presentation on lab results at university in Vienna, and I had no idea about what it was I was saying and it was awful, but I went on a course to try and calm myself down and I think it worked.



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ITIJ: If you were to have a fantasy dinner party with guests alive or dead, who would you invite?

MW: I think I would invite Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, Meryl Streep, Julia

ITIJ:

Who would play you in a movie of your life?

MW: Dustin Hoffman – I think he looks a bit like me, and he's a fantastic actor. He does have the ability to slip into a certain personality and played very convincingly. Just think about Tootsie, Papillon or Rain Man. Especially the last one shows how interested he is in a special behaviour of someone else and how he manages to reproduce a very realistic behaviour.

ITIJ: How do you like to relax after work?

MW: Sometimes it is important just doing nothing. It took me several years to find out that the promoter personality cannot just drive on forever. On the other hand sports are very important to feel satisfied. I enjoy skiing, tennis and classic dancing.



ITIJ: Do you find it hard to switch off after you have dealt with a particularly harrowing case?

MW: As an emergency physician you see a lot of cases that others never see in their life or just on horrible movies. Cases, like a mother driving with a car over the head of her baby or a drowned child in the garden pool, do touch your emotions. The most important part to coping with harrowing cases such as these is to do an honest debrief with the involved team after completion of the case. The question is: 'Have we done everything according to the state of the art to help the patient?' Usually the answer is 'yes', even though there is always some room for improvement. Once you are convinced that you have done a good job, then the rest has to be put into God's faith.

ITIJ: What are you proudest of in your life?

MW: My two daughters – 18 and 14 years old, they make me very happy. We all had our fun when we were younger, and I think it's important that they do too.

ITIJ: What have you been up to recently in your work life?

MW: As a physician I want to provide good medicine to my patients. I'm very happy that EURAMI accreditation became internationally

recognised. At the moment about ten air ambulance providers on several continents are in the pipeline for accreditation. In addition we supported the idea of the Flymi empty leg option tool, as it is providing information about quality and not just the price to the client.

On the business side we started our new enterprise med con team as an excellence centre in the field of worldwide emergency medicine, assistance medicine and telemedicine. As the Steinbeis scientific centre we were involved in the EU telemedical project WISECOM, which looked for optimal technical and medical solutions to build up the communication infrastructure at the first 24 hours after a major catastrophe. And finally we are planning a large medical centre in Stuttgart, Germany, to provide state of the art medical care in combination with excellence service.

ITIJ: Where do you see the future of the air ambulance industry going?

MW: I think in general, the future of the industry is secure, as put simply there is no other possible way of transporting patients in need quickly and safely. As the normal aircraft industry is improving, so is business aviation and the sector as a whole is developing and moving at a relatively rapid pace. Take, for example, the launch of the A380.

Will the A380's ability to take patients have an effect on the number of patients transported by air ambulance?

MW: No, it won't directly, but indirectly there are some issues raised. More people use aircraft a great deal now as it is now so affordable and regular, and people are travelling further and further away. Inevitably, some of these patients will need

transporting back home after an accident, and until the medical care infrastructure in remote regions is on a par with Western medicine infrastructure, the air ambulance industry is safe. It will be a long time until the same medical service and infrastructure is available in every country around the world, and until that time, air ambulances are not merely safe, they are integral. Nobody cares about the medical care in a country until something actually goes wrong – travellers' education needs to be improved so that people are more aware of dangers inherent to a country. Also, as there a more pre-existing medical condition travellers going abroad now, there is a high likelihood that air ambulances will become even more highly utilised. The problem with travellers these days is that they don't understand the value of travel insurance – they are more than happy to pay for a new gadget or piece of clothing for the holiday, but then they say 'I can't afford travel insurance!' – this is not acceptable. People just don't care and think about that – no-one wants to think about bad things that can go wrong when travelling, but at the end of the day, all risks must be considered by the traveller. It is very affordable now as well, especially when it is considered that it is only three per cent of the cost of the holiday package.



Apologies

In the last issue of *ITIJ*, we incorrectly stated that the subjects of our profile, Susanne Holst and Thorikild Lykke, were from International SOS, when in fact they are both international network managers for SOS International.