



A unique event for the francophone respiratory community

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An event that should reinforce the links between French-speaking respiratory medicine communities worldwide <http://ow.ly/iMvk30eQzQi>

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In the 17–19th centuries, French was the language of international communication, as English has since become. It is still one of the official languages of many international organisations, is spoken by >250 million individuals worldwide, and is one of the official languages of 41 countries and dependent entities [1, 2] (figure 1). French-speaking countries, present on four continents, represent a large variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, including not only highly developed but also rapidly developing countries.

The contribution of French scientists and clinicians in the field of respiratory medicine has been recognised for many centuries. From the pioneering work of René Laennec in the discovery of chest auscultation in 1819, to the development of spirometric measures by Robert Tiffeneau in 1947, and the more recent contributions of French scientists in France, Canada and many other countries [3]. More recently, the European Respiratory Society recognised the contribution of its francophone members in offering a half-day session in French at its International Congress. Needless to say that close links have developed over time between Francophone clinicians and researchers, and colleagues from other regions and countries, but there has been recently an express desire to strengthen such links within the francophone community.

Over the last decade, the Société de Pneumologie de Langue Française (SPLF) has organised successful meetings that have attracted many participants from the global French-speaking community and facilitated the participation of physicians from countries with limited resources. More recently, a subentity of the SPLF has been developed under the name of the Espace Francophone de Pneumologie (EFP) [4]. This is a gathering of members of the International Francophone Medical Respiratory Societies from 25 countries. It aims to provide a common platform to improve communications between these societies, acting as partners sharing French as a common language, to foster knowledge translation, exchange of expertise and collaboration in order to improve care, teaching and research, including publication of continuing medical education documents and clinical studies.

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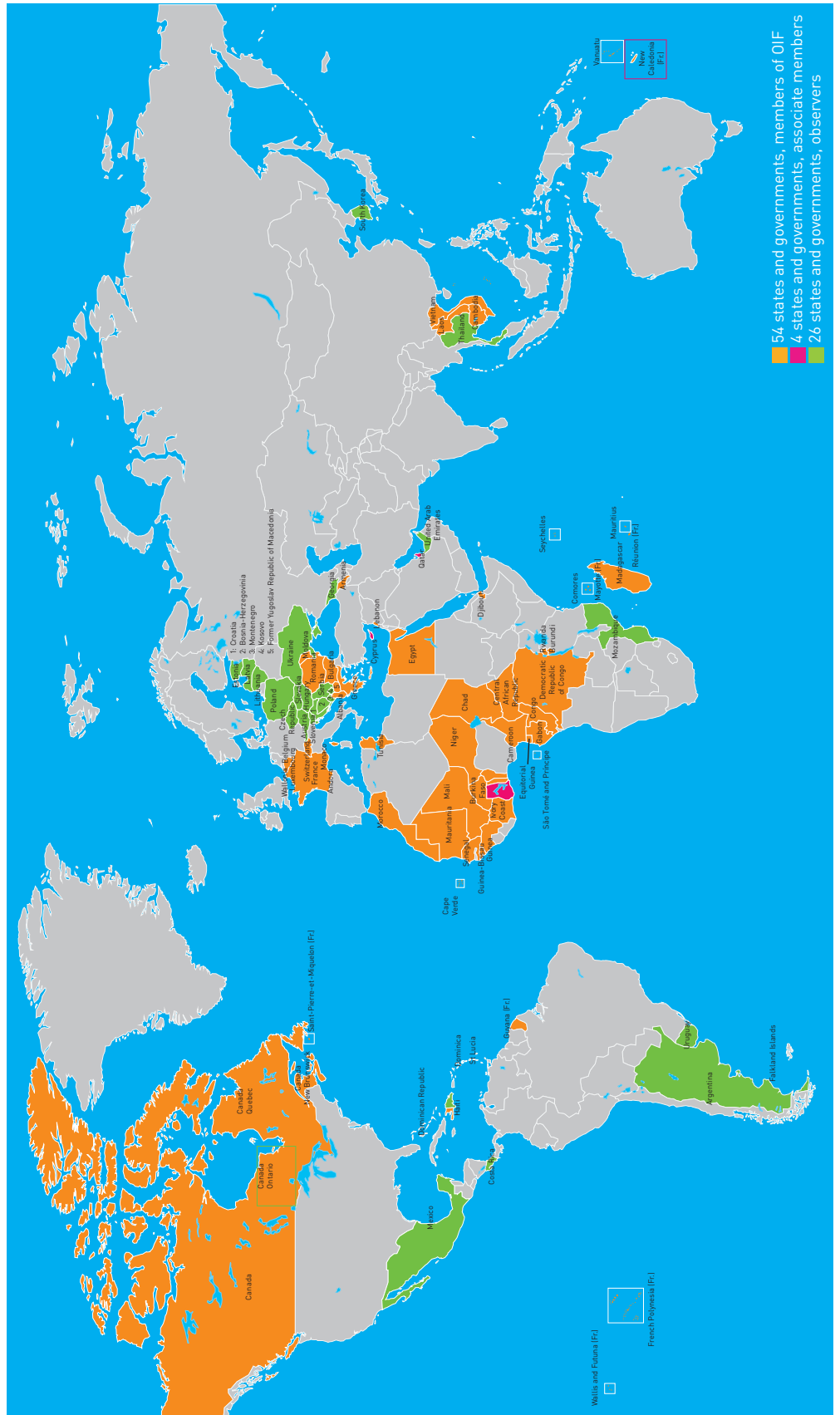


FIGURE 1 World map of the francophone community. Fr.: French territory; OIF: Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. Reproduced and modified from [8] with permission from the publisher.

There are wide disparities from one country to another in regard to the resources available, opportunities and facilitating environment, either for patient education, caregiver training, basic or specialised care, and research in the respiratory field. However, all share the desire to improve the fate of their patients and bring to their community the best available care, while addressing regional needs and care gaps. Despite their limited resources, developing countries are increasingly producing high-quality scientific contributions in the field of respiratory medicine, while expressing the need to learn more and benefit from the expertise of developed countries.

The main common activity of the EFP, the Biennale de Pneumologie, was initially held in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2015 chaired by Mirna Waked (Balamand University, Achrafieh, Lebanon). It was masterfully organised by Georges Khayat (St Joseph University, Beirut, Lebanon) and Ali Benkheder (Abderrahmen Mami Hospital, Ariana, Tunisia), the latter acting as SPLF general secretary for international relations. >500 respirologists and contributors took part to this event. It was decided that the second Biennale would be held in North America, in the City of Quebec, the cradle of French civilisation in North America. The Quebec Respiratory Health Network of the Fond de Recherche du Québec en Santé (Réseau en santé respiratoire du FRQS), then led by its past director, Yves Tremblay (Centre hospitalier universitaire de Québec – Université Laval, Quebec), volunteered to organise this event, with the help of all national societies of the EFP, and other Quebec respiratory organisations such as the Québec Lung Association (Association pulmonaire du Québec), the Québec Education Respiratory Network (Réseau Québécois d'éducation en santé respiratoire), the Québec Respirologists Association (Association des pneumologues de la province de Québec) and the Laval University Faculty of Medicine (Faculté de Médecine, Université Laval).

>1000 participants will gather from October 12 to 14, 2017, in the Quebec City Convention Centre. This meeting is quite unique, as it will not only offer updates on cutting edge knowledge in respiratory care but also on basic science and therapeutic education. There will be five parallel sessions; three on critical and clinical care, one specifically on patient education and health educators training, and one on basic science. The latter has been organised for the first time as a collaboration between the Respiratory Health Network of the FRQS and the Journées de Recherche Respiratoire (J2R), an organisation devoted to the presentation of basic science work and exchange among researchers in France and French communities. This is the beginning of a new long-term collaboration between the Respiratory Health Network of the FRQS and J2R.

The main theme of the congress is “personalised medicine”, which could be defined as “offering the appropriate treatment to the right person at the right time”. This means not only to offer specific treatments to different phenotypes or endotypes of respiratory diseases but also to consider the resources and the environment of the patient, as well as psychosocial and other individual characteristics. The programme of this congress can be found on the website (www.pneumologie2017.ca). It includes themes familiar to developing countries, such as tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, in addition to the most recent developments in the fields of “omics”, biomarkers and innovative therapies.

The congress programme not only provides an update on the most recent advances in respiratory science but also responds to the express needs of developing countries in regard to improving respiratory care with sometimes limited resources. Workshops have been organised during this congress to help participants learn about best care and best practices according to specific needs and the availability of diagnostic and follow-up means, as well as treatments available in these different countries.

Quebec City is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and was recently declared to be the best city in Canada and second-best in North America to visit by tourists [5]. The Quebec Centre of Congress, located in the old town, is close to one of the first hospitals to be built in North America, in 1637, the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec [6]. At the beginning of the Canadian colony, physicians were coming from France but when England conquered Canada in 1760 (Canada was officially made a British colony in 1763 with the Treaty of Paris), English, Scottish and Irish physicians became increasingly involved in healthcare of the Canadian population [7]. Later, physicians from the Province of Quebec trained mainly in France, England and in Canada's southern neighbour, the USA. This mixed French Canadian medicine, a mixture of both French and English traditions, and the links with western Canada and world communities, including France, developed exponentially in the last few decades.

Laval University is proud to host this unique event that we hope will be the first many successful meetings in the future for the French community. We hope that this meeting will reinforce the links already established between all French communities, as it has been previously done with other countries worldwide, as we share not only a language but also many cultural elements. Hopefully, events such as the Biennale will contribute to improve health outcomes worldwide.

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