The Mohegan Sun Casino and resort, a venue rich in boxing history, was the venue for this year’s annual conference of the Association of Ringside Physicians.

The weekend was well attended with over 100 delegates from all over the world. The opening address reminded the attendees that they were somewhat different from other doctors and allied medical specialists. Not only was ringside medicine a unique field in which to specialise, but also those people present had all paid for their own travel and hotel arrangements.

The format was one that has been developed following feedback from previous delegates over the years. We have learned that the standard one-hour lecture has significant and recognised morbidity, including sleep apnoea and whiplash!

We set out to deliver 25-minute lectures, with an equal amount of time being allocated for questions, and audience interaction. From the outset we reminded all present that the very nature of ringside medicine meant that we were all continually learning, and all views and opinions were encouraged in the hope that new safety measures could evolve from a mutual understanding and consensus.

The first lectures were from Dr Nitin Sethi and Dr John Stiller, who discussed the basic understanding of concussion, and seizures presenting in combat sport respectively.

Thereafter the audience were treated to a practical display of MMA Holds and their medical consequences. Drs Hilary Williams and Charles Everly went through a comprehensive demonstration with a real time commentary by Dr Rick Weinstein. This remains a very popular part of the annual meeting, as it allows an in depth analysis of real life arm leg and choke holds, with specific advice as to what we as ringside doctors need to look out for and act upon.

Dr Margaret Goodman provided and expert update on the latest developments in respect of the fight against performance altering and enhancing drugs.

A brief overview of morbidity and mortality in combat sport allowed a very dynamic debate to evolve, with many of the audience providing their own insight into a specific fight that was highlighted. Overall it was agreed that the ringside physician was a doctor first and foremost, and he had to continually monitor the welfare of his patients (The fighters!) The subtle signs of injury and deteriorating welfare were highlighted during the video of this one particular fight, and the learning points were discussed in great depth.

The Buffet lunch provided an opportunity for old colleagues to meet, and new friendships to be forged. Being surrounded by like-minded colleagues is a source of great support and reassurance for those new to the field of ringside care. Our organization is inclusive and supportive of all, and we really are a self-help group for the very rare breed who chose to work in this field.

The afternoon began with a comprehensive overview of orthopaedic injuries in Combat sports as presented by Dr Weinstein. The Mohegan Suns resident combat Physician, Dr Michael Schwartz followed up with a clear description of dehydration in our sports, highlighting the attendant risks.

An overview of training presented by Dr John Neidecker concluded this session, and was followed by an informal coffee break.

The final session of the first day began with a discussion on the pulmonary issues associated with combative sport as presented by Dr Mark Mirabelli, and the day concluded with a basic question and answer session hosted by a forum of established and experienced physicians. One delegate commented that he felt able to ask any question he wanted without fear of being judged, as was so often the experience when talking about boxing and Mixed martial Arts.

The Saturday Evening banquet was a very well attended and highly enjoyable event. Evander Holyfield and Mickey Ward were our guests of honour, and they delighted everyone with their honest tales of life as a boxer. All present had the chance to meet and have a photograph with these ambassadors of boxing.

Sunday began bright and early with Big John McCarthy outlining the crucial link between referee and doctor, and how best to maximise this partnership for the benefit of our patients.

Mr Andy Foster talked us through California’s new weight cutting plan.

After mid morning coffee the session continued with Dr Jon Gelber outlining his vision for a more coordinated approach to research into the combat sports. Those of us at ringside are ideally placed to collect and collate data that could be used to improve safety.

Dr Dom Colletta presented “The Show must go on?” which is the annual review of real life dilemmas faced by our members. Dr Kim Meatrel from Canada presented a scenario that could be best described as every ringside doctors worst nightmare!!! This led to a prolonged and impassioned discussion on how best the situation could have been resolved. This clearly outlined the educational benefit to all of a dynamic and inclusive discussion rather than the old fashioned slide show. Some of us who have been ringside for 30 years learned some new things during this debate !

After another working buffet lunch, the final session started with a panel discussion that allowed ringside medical staff to understand the perspective of the Commissioner, and vice versa.

Dr Steve Gelfman and Mr David Maldonado presented a comprehensive insight into maxillofacial injures, lacerations and their treatment.

The closing session allowed Dr Angela Gagliardi to explain the Medical Emergency Action Plan, which is essentially a well-drilled medical treatment and evacuation plan that should be activated in the case of serious injury to a combatant.

The closing presentation was from our president Dr Larry Lovelace who gave a refresher and revision course covering all aspects of ringside care.

The general consensus was that the conference was a huge success !

The format we have developed seems to work !

Short lectures, plenty of time for questions and open discussion, and a general informality underpinned by a dedicated team of experienced ringside medics, all of whom give freely of their time and their knowledge.

We hope to be in Las Vegas at Halloween next year .

If you work at ringside in any capacity…..come and join us !

Let us know what you want covered in the conference next year, and we will go out and find the best and the brightest to talk to you

The conference is based on your needs…..not our convenience !!!!