



## ICOPLAST—from infancy to the First World Congress

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The coming year 2022 will be special for the global plastic surgery community. From May 19th through 21st, 2022 ICOPLAST organizes the First International World Congress meeting to be held in Lima, Peru in conjunction and collaboration with the Peruvian Society for Plastic Surgery. This historic event gives us pause to look back at the creation and success of ICOPLAST over the last 6 years.

ICOPLAST was formed out of the void that IPRAS created following the dissolution of this society [1]. After multiple meetings in both Chicago and Belgium, the world looked to the formation of a new society that would be more transparent, represent global plastic surgery societies, and provide educational content and patient safety issues common to international plastic surgery. The launching of ICOPLAST occurred in 2016 in Punta del Este, Uruguay during the annual FILACP meeting bringing together 23 countries from South America (Fig. 1). The beginnings of ICOPLAST focused on being careful financially, transparent, and solid

with the infrastructure while providing scientific educational activities.

The organization itself is composed of a council of national delegates which are decided upon by each national society that is recognized by the Ministry of Health or other governmental bodies as a primary organization for the specialty of plastic and reconstructive surgery.

ICOPLAST was formed as an organization of organizations, more specifically a confederation of societies. It is a federation of national plastic surgery societies instead of individual members. One plastic surgery society/organization is allowed from each country. ICOPLAST then serves individual plastic surgeons through their respective national societies that are represented through national delegates.

The purpose of ICOPLAST is to offer its members and plastic surgeons a high level of education to benefit patients, plastic surgeons, trainees, and plastic surgery worldwide as well as exceptional scientific exchange and networking [2]. The organization itself represents the full scope of plastic reconstructive and esthetic surgery.

ICOPLAST is officially registered as a non-profit organization in the Netherlands. This choice occurred after several months of research on the best place for our international non-profit organization.

The board of directors of ICOPLAST manages the day-to-day business operations of the organization and has all appropriate authority to do so. The board, however, is accountable to the council of national delegates ensuring appropriate representation and oversight for the organization's management. The board itself controls and is responsible for the management of finances. The board of directors consists of 11 members nominated by the regional plastic surgery societies and consists of representatives from North America, Central/South America, Europe, Asia, Oceania, Africa, and the Middle East. The number of board seats is based upon the population of each region. Nominations for the board of directors are conducted by each particular region and subsequently voted on by the council of national delegates.

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**Fig. 1** National delegates from member societies meet in Punta del Este (Uruguay) to formally launch ICOPLAST



Each member country has a representative on the council of national delegates. This council is the ultimate governing body of the society to which the board of directors is accountable. The council of national delegates meets, at a minimum, at least yearly and with the COVID pandemic business has taken place on a zoom platform. Delegates are elected for a 4-year term which is renewable once. The council of delegates come together as a General Assembly which serves as a forum of communication with the individual members of the national societies, but the General Assembly itself has no voting rights or governance of power.

Management of ICOPLAST is currently conducted by the management services of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons; financially, however, the Morgan Stanley accounts remain in the Netherlands of which the organization is incorporated. Each country contributes dues based on the number of individual members that they have in the societies.

ICOPLAST committees focus on regulatory qualities, patient's safety, education, humanitarian activities, and the audit committee. Furthermore, the ICOBRA registry has been incorporated within ICOPLAST and is responsible for communicating and coordinating breaking news in plastic surgery safety issues related to each member national society [3]. ICOPLAST trainees have also been established through a WhatsApp group to encourage residents in training to be a part of a continuing system of education and dissemination of knowledge [4, 5].

### Professional Standards Committee

The Professional Standards Committee seeks to produce a global definition for the plastic surgeon, and try to standardize training and curricula, and establish guidelines for the practice of plastic surgery and plastic surgical procedures. It

should also highlight the international position and perspective on newsworthy issues related to plastic surgery.

### International Collaboration on Breast Registry Activities ICOBRA

An impressive result of the founders of the Australasian Foundation for plastic surgery is ICOBRA [3]. This international consortium focuses on collaborating, improving, and inspiring on the topic of breast implant registries on an international level. ICOBRA moved to ICOPLAST and has been active over the past years on a number of topics. After Rod Cooters tremendous achievements with ICOBRA, the current lead is Hinne Rakhorst from the Netherlands, together with Birgit Stark from Sweden.

Over the past years, ICOBRA has been busy. First, work has been done unifying and conforming datasets and data definitions. These sets have been published and subsequently used to link all implant-specific data points to the barcodes of the devices. This means that it is now technically possible to see implant details such as texture, fill, and shape via the barcode on the device. This technique facilitates automatic data entry reducing data burden significantly while increasing data quality.

During the public hearings on breast implants by the FDA and the ANSM in France, ICOBRA has submitted letters to underscore the importance of registries.

ICOBRA has been actively supporting starting registries. Countries including Korea, France, Germany, and Italy have established registries with the guidance and collaboration from the more established registries including Australia, Sweden, and the Netherlands through the ICOBRA network.

ICOBRA has set a goal to provide a report of 1.000.000 implants by 2024. In 2019–2020, existing mature registries

have been working on uniform analysis of their national data. Countries involved include Sweden, Australia, the USA, and the Netherlands while France, UK, and German experts were also involved. The result is a report on an unmet 220,000 implants that will be published shortly. This provides independent real-world data on breast implant safety.

In 2021, ICOBRA held a summit discussing breast implant illness (BII) and how we need to move forward on this topic. The group agreed that BII should be a topic of breast implant registries and prepared further work on uniform capture and analysis of this important topic.

Finally, ICOBRA will have its postponed international summit in the Peru meeting, tentatively scheduled for May 18, 2022. The title of the summit is “ICOBRA connecting data and people internationally.” Special focus is on how we can connect registries with strategies. How do we move forward on the topic of BII and what are the next steps towards our 1,000,000 implant report goal?

All societies that have questions, ambitions, or thoughts about setting up registries or have a registry are welcomed into ICOBRA. Together we are stronger and better.

## Webinar committee

When ICOPLAST was founded, it was thought that the new organization should be active online, and that we should look at ways to share knowledge worldwide via the online environment. Therefore in 2018, pre-COVID, the first webinars were organized. The webinars are organized by the members of the webinar committee as well as by people organizing local events that use our platform and connections.

Benefits of webinars are clear today as we are all familiar with them since COVID catalyzed this technology to the hype it is today [6]. For ICOPLAST, specifically it proved to be a way to connect to individual surgeons over national delegates. It proved to be a tool for our identity as a new organization. Whereas before COVID we were happy to have 100 registrants, today we typically have more than 1500 registrations per event.

Other ways of supporting our membership are by providing our Zoom platform to local initiatives such as for the Stoke Mandeville Webinar Series by James Chan, Global Surgery Amsterdam Initiative from Mathijs Botman, and the Dupuytren’s Foundation by Dominic Furnis and Paul Werker and finally the Humanitarian Plastic Surgery initiative by Corstiaan Breugem. These groups organized webinars and symposiums serving the aims of ICOPLAST. All users were extremely happy not only with our webinar service platform, but also with our PR campaigns for their initiatives.

Result of the webinars in 2021 is that ICOPLAST was able to interact with over 22,000 plastic surgeons worldwide

(Fig. 2). Those surgeons from less fortunate countries were able to watch teachers that otherwise would not be seen.

When we were adapting to the “new normal” way of life during the COVID-19 pandemic [7], ICOPLAST also teamed up with the Plastic Surgery Association of Trainees of the United Kingdom (PLASTA-UK) and the *European Journal of Plastic Surgery* (EJPS) [8] and the *Journal of Plastic, Reconstructive, and Aesthetic Surgery* (JPRAS) to launch Virtual Journal Club for both journals with great success.

In addition, the ICOPLAST YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCcQQrZp97sAOZT2NLn8jw7w>) grew and our social media channels: Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/ICOPLAST/>); Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/icoplast/?hl=en>) and LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/icoplast-europe-035b0a133/?originalSubdomain=nl>) as well.

ICOPLAST provides certificates of attendance only to plastic surgeons that are members of our member societies. Surgeons can use these certificates for CME accreditation if their national society endorses ICOPLAST initiatives.

Today, we have connections to thousands of plastic surgeons worldwide providing ways to reach our goals; to be of value to patients, plastic surgery, and plastic surgeons. If you organize an event locally, please be in touch so we can look into ways we can expand your initiative and make ICOPLAST your springboard into the international pitch of plastic surgery. Please like our social media channels to keep being informed.

## Sushruta Professorship

ICOPLAST has collaborated with the esteemed Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh to elect a professorship in plastic surgery. Established in 2012 through the generosity of the Guha family, the Sushruta Professorship aims to recognize a distinguished scholar in Plastic Surgery. The award is open globally. The successful applicant receives an honorarium of \$1500 and up to a maximum of \$2000 towards traveling expenses to deliver the lecture during an official ICOPLAST symposium or conference.

## Highlights of the past 5 years

In the first years of ICOPLAST, the organization focused on online presence and teaching opportunities such as visiting professorships. ICOPLAST has participated in several





**Fig. 2** Over 1400 registrants for the 2021 webinar on lipofilling in breast reconstruction by Roger Khouri (Miami, USA) and Andrzej Piatkowski de Grzymala (Maastricht, the Netherlands). Figure provided by Hinne Rakhorst

society meetings previously but the first stand-alone meeting has not occurred.

Our debut in 2017 was in The Gold Coast of Australia, with a half-day symposium in association with the annual meeting of The Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons who invited us to add an ICOPLAST scientific session to their annual meeting as a scientific partnership.

The first 1st full-day ICOPLAST scientific meeting was in Egypt through a great invitation in March 2018 by the late and beloved Professor Badran from the Egyptian Society. The scientific topics were on breast cancer reconstruction: microsurgery, flaps, alloderm, lipoinjection, and anaplastic large cell lymphoma (ALCL).

The second ICOPLAST meeting was in South Korea in November 2018 joining the annual South Korean Association. The input of ICOPLAST featured lectures by Dr. Fu-Chan Wei, Dr. Mat Hanasano, and JP Hong on microsurgery, followed by a half-day craniofacial program with Dr. Steinbacher and Dr. Jessie Taylor. The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh presented the Shushruta Professorship on the same ICOPLAST scientific day.

The third ICOPLAST full-day meeting was in Waterloo, Belgium, in March 2019 through a kind invitation of the President of the Belgium Society Dr.

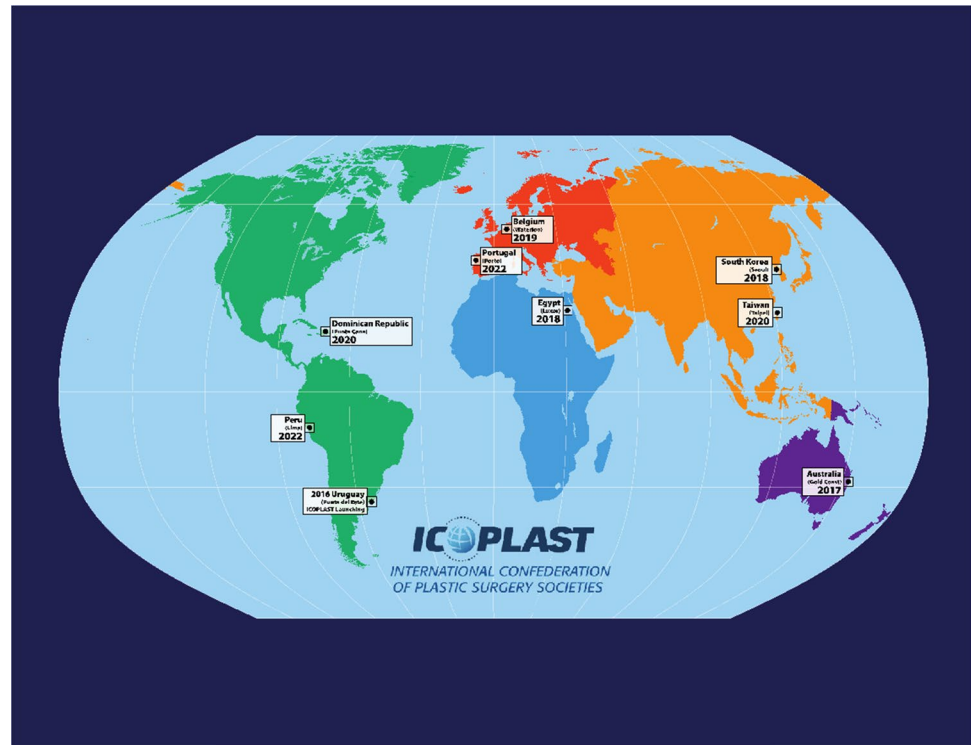
Moustapha Hamdi. The surgical themes did include facial esthetics (rhinoplasty and facelifts) and breast reconstruction.

The fourth ICOPLAST full-day meeting was scheduled in Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, for April 2020 with topics such as safety for the patients covering gluteal augmentation and complications and high-definition liposuction. Unfortunately, COVID-19 interrupted the good program and like other meetings it was rolled over and eventually canceled for safety.

Lastly, the fifth ICOPLAST live and virtual scientific meeting was in Asia on December 5th, 2021 with an invitation from the Taiwan Plastic Surgery Societies. The theme was microsurgery and esthetics. Injectables for the Asians and Caucasians were covered and much thanks to Drs. Arthur Swift, Pedro Ciudad, and Carrie Chiu and their great presentations.

The Education Committee organized two successful symposiums on humanitarian surgery in collaboration with the Australian Society of Plastic Surgery and the Amsterdam University Medical Center (the Netherlands). Both of them focused on new ways to deliver education and improved medical care in a long-lasting and durable way in the world's poorest countries.

**Fig. 3** Five continents of past and future symposia and meetings



Besides our upcoming World Congress, we are also planning the first ICOPLAST Day to be held on the 4th of October, a day before the European Society of Plastic Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery (ESPRAS) Quadrennial Congress 2022, in Gaia-Porto, Portugal. This represents the first educational collaboration between ICOPLAST and ESPRAS, the umbrella organization of all EU national societies (Fig. 3).

As the organization has grown its membership, identity, and visibility, the demand and opportunities have risen into the possibility of organizing a global meeting serving the plastic surgeons worldwide to connect and exchange ideas and innovations.

### ICOPLAST—Lima 2022

The First World International stand-alone congress of ICOPLAST will be held in Lima, Peru in 2022. Approximately 60 faculty members have been invited as worldwide experts and leaders in the field to participate in the meeting and a call for abstract presentation has been issued. Panels, symposia, and lively discussions will take place as this meeting will be held in conjunction with the Peruvian Society of Plastic Surgeons (Fig. 4).

Having 3 full days of educational opportunities and learning, social programs also include trips to Machu Picchu as well as faculty and gala dinners.

The prestigious Sushruta Professorship Lecture in Plastic Surgery will be presented during the first day of the Congress on May 19, 2022. In addition, the 1st International Collaboration on Breast Registry Activities (ICOBRA) meeting will be held immediately before our world congress.

Despite these unprecedented pandemic times, we are planning on holding an in-person event. We believe people are eager to return to in-person meetings and socialize. Every precaution is being taken for COVID testing, vaccine requirements, and masking. Registrations can already be made online through the Congress official website: [www.icoplastperu2022.org](http://www.icoplastperu2022.org).

### Conclusions

In summary, the organization has grown tremendously in the last 6 years. As with any organization, it is experiencing some growing pains and the COVID-19 pandemic has not helped with any continued expansion. ICOPLAST remains strong in its principles which were founded on the basis of a transparent organization that will provide a forum for patient safety, international plastic surgery, and educational opportunities. We look forward to seeing you in Lima, Peru to continue to grow and expand this opportunity on the world stage.

**Conflict of interest** Author Dr. Horacio F. Mayer is the Editor-in-Chief of the *European Journal of Plastic Surgery*. Gregory R.D. Evans, Robert X. Murphy, Hinne A. Rakhorst, Lucie Lessard, Ahmed Khashaba, and Julio D. Kirschbaum have no other relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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**Fig. 4** Electronic flyers to promote the first ICOPLAST World Congress ever

## Declarations

**Ethical approval** For this kind of article, formal consent from a local ethics committee is not required.