Just What The Doctor Ordered

Southern Destinations That Deliver Medically Minded Meetings

By Adrianne Bowen

When you hear the term “medical meeting,” what comes to mind? Does it invoke images of the latest models of stethoscopes displayed in neat rows for attendees to try? Or do you picture a person in a white lab coat standing at the front of a room behind a podium, speaking about the latest information on biomedical research?

While these elements are certainly part of the picture of a medical meeting, adhering to the newest compliance guidelines, accommodating substantial amounts of space for expanding conferences, incorporating the latest technology for interactive medical presentations, and delivering entertaining activities and fabulous food are not only desired, they are expected.

Fortunately for savvy planners seeking Southern destinations for their upcoming events, a host of locales more than meet the expectations of medical and pharma businesses. Check out some of the best places in the South for hosting these types of meetings to ensure your next medically minded event is just what the doctor ordered.
MEDICAL & PHARMACEUTICAL MEETINGS

Got HMCC?

Sticking to all medical compliance laws when planning events for the medical and pharma industries is crucial. To make sure that your event is compliant, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) offers the Healthcare Meeting Compliance Certificate (HMCC). “The 4-hour intensive training is designed to help pharmaceutical and medical meeting planners understand compliance issues related to meeting organization and design. We have a U.S. and a European version, which we can customize for other regions,” said Kristi Sanders, CMM, DES, HMCC, director of the MPI Academy for MPI, based in Dallas. “This is the only designation available to meeting and event organizers working in the medical/pharma/healthcare/life sciences industry and it’s held by more than 1,200 professionals around the world.”

When compliant with the industry’s strict standards, planners can rest easy that their medical events will be successful in every way. Here are some things to consider that will help protect your company from violating any federal regulations, according to Sanders:

- Be aware of what the governmental policies or regulatory policies are, not only in your country of origin but also in any country in which you are doing business
- Don’t forget to familiarize yourself with the regulations or policies that apply to attendees traveling from countries outside of where you are holding your event
- Find an internal and external compliance partner who can help you see what you’re missing and keep track of the paperwork
- Join the HMCC community and learn best practices for healthcare meeting compliance.

Miami

“With its warm sunshine, sensual tropical breezes, soothing crystal blue waters, serene spas, creative energy and Latin rhythms that inspire you to dance, Miami is a place people come to heal body and soul. Perhaps this is part of the reason behind Miami’s recent emergence as a global magnet for medical meetings and tourism,” said Barry Moskowitz, vice president of convention sales for the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Some of the world’s most cutting-edge medical facilities, research programs and physicians have all played a role in why people from all over the world travel here, either to get healthy or to learn how to restore wellbeing in patients.”

The Miami Beach Convention Center is a key element in drawing medical meetings to the city, according to Moskowitz. A “reimagined and expanded” center is slated to emerge in 2018 as the renovations are completed on the 647,648-square-foot facility, located blocks from the beach and just a short drive to Mount Sinai Medical Center. The $615-million LEED-certified expansion of the center will add 500,000 square feet of exhibit space, 81 breakout rooms and a 60,000-square-foot ballroom.

“Everything about the convention center will be cutting edge, down to its cyber and surgical knives. Mount Sinai’s medical teams will have the technology to live stream and demonstrate medical procedures to conference attendees at the Miami Beach Convention Center.”
Plan your next medical meeting in the city that treats everyone like a local. Discover world-class amenities mixed with sophisticated Southern Hospitality, a perfect combination.

Knoxville will surprise you.
Center,” explained Moskowitz.

Additionally, the Miami Convention Center, located next to the Hyatt Regency Miami, is “one of the community’s most functional meeting, exhibit and entertainment venues,” according to Moskowitz, who added that it is “designed to maximize convenience and flexibility, with 34 well-appointed meeting rooms,” including a 444-seat auditorium and a 117-seat lecture hall for up to 5,000 attendees.

Another venue for medical meetings is the recently redesigned Miami Airport Convention Center (MACC), adjacent to Miami International Airport, adjoining the DoubleTree Hotel and the Miami International Merchandise Mart. “Minutes from downtown Miami, the MACC features 172,000 square feet of high-tech meeting, conference and trade-show space, including a 29,000-square-foot social catering ballroom (the second-largest in the region) and 100,000 square feet of exhibition and function space,” said Moskowitz.

He mentioned that “one of the facilities getting worldwide attention is Mount Sinai Medical Center, one of the state’s first academic teaching hospitals, boasting world-renowned physicians, research programs and medical facilities. Continuously recognized in U.S. News & World Report as a leading facility for cardiology and heart surgery, the center has teamed up with Columbia University to build the Mount Sinai Heart Institute, featuring the best heart attack survival rate in Florida.”

Additionally, “the Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Center is the first in Florida to earn the Outstanding Achievement Award three consecutive times from the Commission on Cancer,” said Moskowitz.

A $205 million transformation, expected to be completed in 2018, will update Mount Sinai’s existing facilities, double the size of the existing emergency room, and add an eight-story surgical tower and new observation unit, Moskowitz said.

Branson, Mo.
The bustling city of Branson is a great place for hosting medical meetings, offering top-notch facilities that medical organizations such as the Topeka, Kan.-based American Holistic Nurses Association (AHNA) use to host their events.

One of these venues is Chateau on the Lake. When looking for a place that would stay within budget and offer holistic surroundings for its 2015 annual conference, Nicole Malcom, BSB-HRM, director of operations for AHNA, said she sought a space that would accommodate more than 500 attendees with a minimum of 38,000 square feet and at least 10 breakout rooms and two ballrooms. It also had to be close to nature, with woods and water nearby. She chose the peaceful Chateau on the Lake in Branson, which fit her needs perfectly.

“This location was ideal because it met the minimum requirement of 38,000 square feet, natural surroundings, and food and beverage within our budget,” Malcom said.

Research Triangle, N.C.
Anchored by three leading research universities – North Carolina State University in Raleigh, Duke University in Durham and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – it’s no wonder that Research Triangle is a top medical meetings destination. Also a part of the research component, North Carolina Central University in Durham is located close to Research Triangle Park and is home to the Biomanufacturing Research Institute and Technology Enterprise (BRITE) Center for Excellence. With such a focus on research, medical and
FIND YOUR CENTER

The newly renovated Miami Beach Convention Center, that is. Unveiling in 2018, it’s the perfect meeting space to put your perfectionist-side at peace, just blocks from the ocean.

500,000 square feet of renovated exhibit space, a new 60,000-square-foot ballroom and 81 breakout rooms with more than 190,000 square feet of meeting space.

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pharmaceutical event planners can count on some excellent choices for hosting meetings.

The North Carolina Biotechnology Center’s Hamner Conference Center “offers a variety of spaces and amenities that no other conference center in the area can match,” said Lana Archer, the center’s director.

On May 15, the North Carolina Microbiome Consortium hosted its inaugural event at the center. With 170 guests attending the full-day event featuring “distinguished speakers from industry, government, academia, a poster session and ample networking opportunities, the Consortium meeting leveraged many of the resources that make the Hamner Conference Center an ideal location: the Galleria, for registration, breaks, networking and a poster session; the Auditorium, for speakers and panel discussions; our spacious conference rooms and beautiful garden/patio for lunch,” said Archer.

The North Carolina Association for Biomedical Research (NCABR) held a two-day conference May 4 – 5 at the center, addressing “key issues for successful animal care and use programs, including the roles and responsibilities of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), semiannual program reviews and inspections, training and personnel qualifications, and protocol review, including ongoing oversight and noncompliance issues in a case study format,” Archer explained. “Day two provided in-depth presentations and discussion during multiple plenary and breakout sessions. The NCABR Conference leveraged all of the resources mentioned in the Consortium example above, as well as optimizing the HCC’s abundance of conference rooms for breakout sessions.”

Access To Expertise
How Medical Meetings Connect With Universities & Hospitals

Destinations that include medical schools and teaching hospitals offer a number of built-in advantages for medical conferences and training seminars, including access to the latest medical equipment and expertise in the newest treatments. Baltimore, which has experienced a 64 percent increase in medical association meetings since 2014, according to Visit Baltimore, is a prime example. Groups such as the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, the Society of Toxicology and the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene are among the medical organizations that have recently held conferences there.

International recognition of the city’s medical institutions and universities, including the University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins Hospital, help make Baltimore a strong destination for medical and healthcare related meetings. The city is also home to hundreds of bioscience companies and research centers. Among these, the University of Maryland BioPark, a 10-acre campus with 1.8 million square feet of office and laboratory space located a short distance from the Baltimore Convention Center and the city’s Inner Harbor, provides meeting facilities for medical convention groups. In East Baltimore, a new biotech area known as the Science + Technology Park at Johns Hopkins features 1.1 million square feet of office and lab space spanning 31 acres, and the bwtech@UMBC Research & Technology Park in nearby Baltimore County includes 350,000 square feet of space on a 71-acre campus.

In addition to having these assets close at hand, meeting planners also benefit from having a built-in attendance base, with more than 189,000 in Baltimore region employed in healthcare services industries.

Groundbreaking Research Centers

Miami is another city with several top-tier medical schools and institutions. “UHealth, the University of Miami Health System, features some of the region’s finest doctors and groundbreaking research, as well as the Miami Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine,” said Barry Moskowitz, vice president of convention sales for the Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau. “In January 2017, the Lennar Foundation Medical Center opened on the Coral Gables campus, providing the services of award-winning facilities such as the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, UHealth Sports Performance and Wellness Institute, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute and UHealth Comprehensive Diabetes Center.”

Other impressive medical facilities cited by Moskowitz include Jackson Memorial, the teaching facility for the University of Miami (UM) Miller...
School of Medicine, where the Ryder Trauma Center has been verified as a Level 1 trauma center by the American College of Surgeons (ACS). Additionally, Holtz Children’s Hospital at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Medical Center is among the nation’s top children’s hospitals, per the U.S. News & World Report’s 2016-17 Best Children’s Hospitals rankings.

**Cutting Edge Facilities**

In Tampa, Fla., the Tampa Convention Center (TCC) has become a premiere venue for medical meetings because of its close, central proximity to three cutting-edge medical facilities: Located near TCC, the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute is the only Florida-based National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center in the country. Tampa General Hospital is a nationwide leader in organ transplants and the region’s only level 1 trauma center, offering training in areas ranging from general internal medicine to neurosurgery. Other Tampa medical facilities include the USF Center for Advanced Medical Learning & Simulation (CAMLS), is the world’s largest hospital medical training facility, and St. Joseph’s Hospital, known for its advanced medical technology and surgery.

This wealth of nearby medical talent and facilities opens up tremendous opportunities for medical event planners, making it easy to coordinate tours, training and other off-site activities and to incorporate top-tier members of the medical community as keynote speakers and panelists, according to Eric Blanc, CMP, director of sales, marketing & convention services at the TCC.

**Expert Speakers To Address Educational Sessions**

Knoxville, Tenn., is home to the University of Tennessee (UT) Medical Center, the region’s only academic medical center, Level 1 Trauma Center and hospital recognized by the Magnet Recognition Program®, which identifies healthcare organizations that provide quality patient care, nursing excellence and innovations in professional nursing practice. According to Sarah Rowan, senior director of sales at Visit Knoxville, medical meeting groups often engage with UT Medical Center by sourcing local speakers and experts on specific and advanced topics.

She added that the 609-bed hospital is the region’s only dedicated Heart Hospital, only adult and pediatric transplant center and a Joint Commission/American Heart Association recognized Comprehensive Stroke Center. The facility also houses the region’s only Level III private-room neonatal intensive care unit and serves as a regional perinatal center.

Knoxville also has six Centers of Excellence that provide comprehensive care to patients, including an Advanced Orthopaedic Center, a Brain and Spine Institute, a Cancer Institute, an Emergency & Trauma Center, a Heart-Lung Vascular Institute, and the Center for Women & Infants all at the UT Medical Center.

“Knoxville is also home to the Provision Center for Proton Therapy, the first facility of its kind in Tennessee and only the second in the Southeast, offering one of the most advanced cancer treatments in the world,” Rowan said. “Groups can engage with the facility via off-site informative tours.”

The Knoxville Convention Center is well-suited to medical conferences, according to Rowan. “With new technologies, such as digital signage and interactive information kiosks, the Knoxville Convention Center is an ideal host for medical meetings,” she said. “Located in the heart of downtown, and connected to approximately 675 hotel rooms, the center is LEED Silver Certified and offers complimentary wireless internet throughout all the meeting spaces, a great value for groups needing convenient and reliable internet connection for their meetings.”

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