

FIFA's medical department takes part in the 27th Annual Crans Montana Forum

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FIFA's Chief Medical Officer Prof. Jiří Dvořák discussed the challenges he and FIFA have attempted to tackle in over two decades at the 27th Annual Crans Montana Forum, in Vienna, Austria.

Delivering a speech at the gathering, centred around Sport, Governance and Ethics, Prof. Dvořák emphasised the power football has in transmitting messages, those of public health included, across the planet. "Through my career as FIFA Chief Medical Officer since 1994, along with my clinical profession at the Schulthess Clinic, I realised that if football talks, everybody listens," he said.

One of the speakers, WADA Executive Committee member and President of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations Francesco Ricci Bitti, was prompt in acknowledging the achievements of FIFA Medicine & Science over the years. "It is a reference for medical organisations within the international federations," he said.

Giving an insight into his time leading FIFA's global health initiatives, including the Medical Legacy for the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa™, Prof. Dvořák spoke on the positive impact he has seen of intertwining important health information with the language of, and figures within, football.

"The Crans Montana Forum is a great platform to meet leaders in sports organisations and politicians to exchange views, experiences and, more importantly, develop a collaboration between the different stakeholders towards improving the quality of life and health for athletes and for the population at large."

Having seen success with the 'FIFA 11 for Health' programme in South Africa, he touched on how the method was being applied to tackling the challenges of antibiotic resistant tuberculosis in Oceania in tandem with the upcoming FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Papua New Guinea 2016. He said: "More than half a million children have successfully completed this programme and the success most likely lies in the simplicity of the football language and the strong promoters."

With doping prevention such a high priority in elite-level sport, Prof. Dvořák touched on the tests he has faced, as well as how FIFA hope to tackle the challenges it presents in the future. "Over 20 years we have focused on education, starting with the U-15/U-16 competitions at Confederation level and the U-17 level with FIFA.

"While other sports codes are confronted with doping scandals, based upon past experience and the analysis of more than 250,000 samples obtained worldwide, we have no scientific evidence of systematic doping in football. There are though, individual cases who are sanctioned in compliance with the World Anti-Doping Code. We were and are partners with the World Anti-Doping Agency to continue developing and pursuing the anti-doping strategy based on the understanding and prevention by education."