

# IHHR

International Hospitals & Healthcare Review



## Interview: Dr Claudia Mika

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Dr Claudia Mika, founder and CEO of Temos International, which certifies the quality of the services and facilities at hospitals, clinics and dental clinics worldwide, discusses her transition from science and research to business development and shares her future dream of seeing mountain gorillas in Uganda

### **Can you introduce yourself and provide an insight into your background?**

I have a PhD in nutritional science and gained my first experience in the management of international projects when I took up my position at the German Aerospace Center (DLR), a

German governmental research organisation, where I planned, organised and evaluated international projects.

I further worked in space physiology projects like MIR'97, including the quality management and



monitoring of standardised procedures for the astronauts on board. I held various positions at the Institutes of Aerospace Medicine, both at DLR in Cologne, Germany, and at the Technical University of Aachen, also in Germany, where I also worked for several years with anorexic patients in the Clinic of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy.

In 2004, we started a scientific research project together with leading travel health insurers and assistance companies with the aim to develop quality criteria specifically for the management of international patients worldwide. Today, I am the CEO of Temos International GmbH, a spin-off of the above-mentioned project. Since 2004, I have been working on quality management, the Temos certification systems, assessing hospitals, IVF clinics, rehabilitation centers and dental clinics worldwide according to our Temos quality criteria for international patients.

### **What led you to found Temos International?**

To be honest, I never planned to found a company – my background is science and research, not business development!

Temos was a European scientific research project and I started as a project assistant when it was established in 2004/05. Over the years, I took more and more responsibility for the project, and in the end accepted the position of the project leader when it was offered to me in the frame of a re-structuring of the project.

As applies to most of those projects, at the end we had to decide what to do with the results. We had a 'ready to use' certification programme but were not allowed to commercially offer it from the German governmental research organisation I was working for due to the non-profit character of this organisation. However, a spin-off was possible and I was offered to start my own company with the Temos services that were available at that time.

### **For you, what are the most exciting aspects of your role?**

I still cannot believe that the vision we had in 2004 when we started the project, and in 2010 when we started the company, has been shared by so many people worldwide. We have 17 regional offices from Colombia and South America to the Philippines and could hand over more than 70 Temos certificates to hospitals, clinics and facilitators, with great people who believe in our unique quality approach. The steady growth, the further development and the recognition and acceptance in a very special market is very exciting.

I still enjoy each of my many travels. I am very privileged that I have the opportunity to visit so many countries, to get to know people from different cultures, to learn from colleagues in the hospitals and clinics worldwide and to share my experience in other parts of the world.

### **What inspires you in your day-to-day work?**

There are three main things. First, I still learn so much from the onsite visits of hospitals and clinics and the people working there that I get home and have a lot of thoughts and ideas on how to further improve our quality programmes. And I try to implement these together with my team. Second, the feedback for our work with the hospitals and clinics, and also the great development of most of our certified partners over the years for better quality and patient safety. Third, the co-operation with my team at the headquarters, with our offices worldwide but also with our assessors' teams: all do an excellent job and support Temos from their different perspectives.

### **Can you tell us about your work on the Temos certification systems?**

Since our start in 2010, we have been working on different quality programmes for the medical tourism market. Today, we have seven different programmes for hospitals, dental clinics, and on reproductive care, eye care, rehabilitation and for medical travel co-ordinators (facilitators). All have been developed with and are reviewed by experts from different quality management systems but also from the respective medical specialty, for example gynaecologists, embryologists and reproductive care specialists contributed to our Quality in International Reproductive Care certification programme.

The quality programmes cover medical service quality and non-clinical services and the hospital/clinic must apply as a whole organisation. Our teams always consist of a quality expert, a medical doctor or dentist and experts from nursing, engineering, and so forth.

We have three different boards that support us for review and further development. Very important feedback also comes from our certified partners by means of direct communication, for example in the frame of our annual Temos Conference or by means of our customer feedback surveys.

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### **Having worked with more than 100 hospitals and medical facilities worldwide, do any particular memories stick in your mind?**

Oh yes, many! Perhaps one example is when we visited one of our first customers, a hospital in Turkey, and realised on the first assessment day when we checked the emergency exit signs and respective ways out that some of the signs were misleading, some of them pointing in the wrong direction, crossing each other, and so forth. When we checked the evacuation routes via the staircase, we found thresholds at every door that made it nearly impossible to evacuate. However, it was the only way out besides the elevators, which cannot be used in case of fire. According to our quality criteria requirements, the hospital could not pass due to that.

To provide a complete report we continued with the assessment, but of course everybody was frustrated at the end of the day. When we arrived the next morning to continue with the other areas for inspection, however, the hospital management asked us to check the emergency and evacuation system again, and we found a completely reviewed system. Overnight, they had not only changed the signs but also had removed all thresholds. This was amazing! We could change our rating and the hospital passed in the end.

### **Which medical tourism topics do you find most interesting and why?**

Quality in medical tourism is the most interesting topic for me. In a positive but also sometimes frustrating way, I find it interesting how people define quality, quality of care and quality management in medical tourism and how they give 'evidence' on their quality, for example by publishing reliable quality reports on their website (positive) or by 'purchasing' non-reputable certificates that are sold on the market (negative). I am also interested by how the market develops and how countries, clusters, individual medical service providers promote themselves and who survives and who doesn't.

### **Can you tell us about your proudest achievement to date?**

I was recently awarded the Dr Sanjiv Malik Lifetime Award at the IMTJ Summit in Opatija, Croatia for our

quality work at Temos. It was not only totally unexpected but also means a lot to me. It was a pleasure and a privilege to have known Dr Sanjiv personally and I appreciate his work, his efforts and cherish him as a person.

**What long-term plans, both professional and personal, do you have?**

My professional plans as the founder and CEO of Temos are to see our vision realised and to achieve excellence in international patient management for Temos certified partners through good governance, transparency, and continuous quality improvement, resulting in the best possible patient care and experience.

My personal plans are on a long imaginary list starting with changing my 'work-life-balance' a bit towards the 'life' side to be able to spend more time with my husband, family and our friends, to keep well and fit, to see the mountain gorillas in Ruanda/Uganda, and to play golf.

**If you could do any other job, what would you do and why?**

I do not want to do any other job but I could imagine working in the field of business economics since I am quite good at numbers, figures, statistics, and so on.

And in my next life I would love to be a sommelier. I enjoy a good glass of wine and some books about wines, grapes, and vineyards worldwide are waiting at home to be read. ●