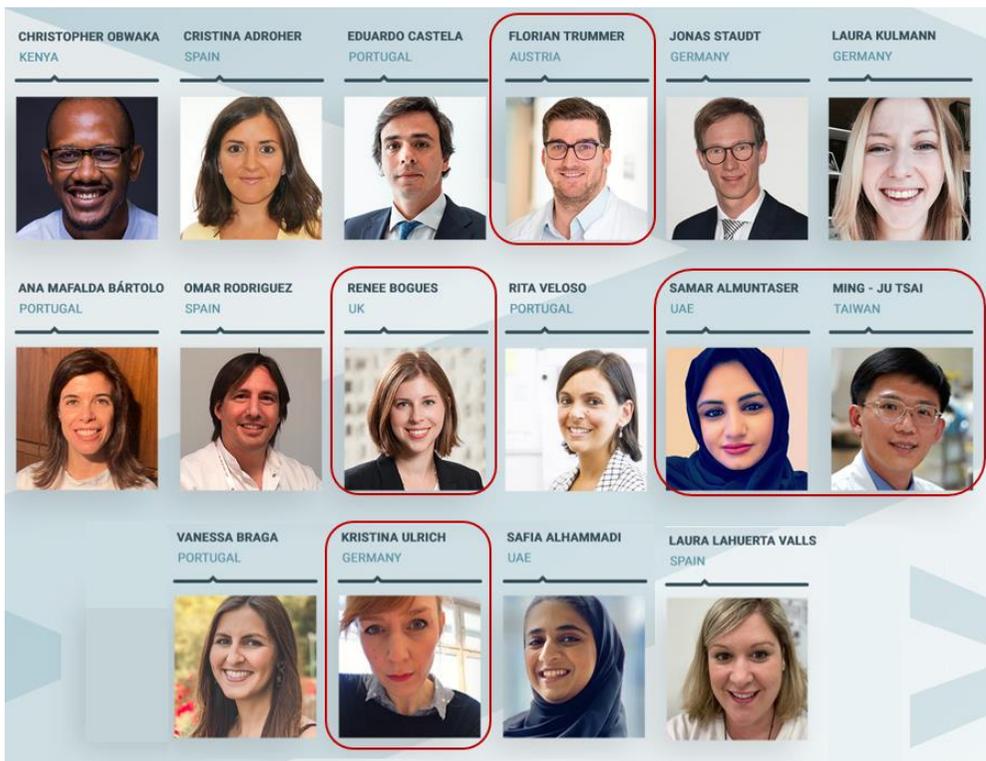


**Authors & Members of the Steering Committee**

*Renee Bogues (US & UK); Ming-Ju (Siegfried) Tsai (Taiwan); Samar Almontaser (UAE); Florian Trummer (Austria); Kristina Ulrich (Germany)*



Joining the second cohort of Young Executive Leaders (YEL) of the International Hospital Federation (IHF) was an excellent opportunity to develop personally and professionally. There were five of us out of 16 who volunteered to lead our two teams in this initiative. Below, we highlight a brief overview of the Initiative, the structure of the program, our lessons learned, and our intention to remain engaged as YEL alumni.

The IHF YEL program is for young executive healthcare leaders who have proven outstanding merit in healthcare management. In the program, they have the opportunity to exchange with peers on healthcare issues as well as to interact with talented thought leaders from all around the world. In 2020, there were 16 of us - physicians, nurses and managers - representing nine countries. Together, we discussed current trends, challenges and opportunities for young healthcare leaders today, creating an environment for collaboration, camaraderie and support.

The first meetings were held in May 2020 and were used to introduce each other, which of course brought a certain nervousness and excitement. Each of us (16 leaders) provided short presentations about ourselves and our experiences in the field of leadership. Due to the events of this special year, most of the topics were naturally shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of the introductory meetings, we were divided into two groups to facilitate the completion of writing four articles from each of the two groups. Two or three people were selected in each group to take over the coordination and management of the group. In Group 1 (focusing on digital health), Renee Bogues, Samar Almontaser and Ming-Ju Tsai were in charge. Group 2 (focusing on classic leadership issue) was led by Florian Trummer and Kristina Ulrich. These leaders were important in drawing the structure of discussion and encouraging all members to input information. In addition, us as the authors also organized as a Steering Committee to coordinate the work between groups.

There were different challenges in both groups. In Group 1, some members were too busy in their work to participate in the activities, including online discussion and organizing articles. In Group 2, there were differences of opinion and perception regarding the topic of leadership. Different expectations around time commitment and challenging professional and personal demands for each of us was a barrier, particularly for many of our clinical colleagues who were directly caring for patients or helping to lead their organizations' COVID-19 responses. This posed major challenges, especially for the management team both in terms of gathering input for articles, as well as generating interesting discussion for the benefit of all. In addition, working together across multiple time zones, cultures, languages, and differences in national healthcare systems and structures required that we all remain flexible and agile in the way in which we

worked together. This was an excellent experience and training, allowing us to refine our skill set for working with colleagues across borders and leading teams of increasingly diverse professionals.

Of course, in addition to the challenges, the positive aspects predominated. IHF provided much support for the YEL program. We have access to view the resources on IHF website and attended the IHF Virtual Forum. Technical support provides us opportunities to keep in touch. A meeting with the YEL 2019 (now as the YEL alumni) in late June also provided much inspiration. Thanks to specific and targeted coordination, a total of eight professional articles (four from both groups) were published within nine weeks. Particularly noteworthy here is the regular, highly professional and international dialogue in countless online meetings. Thanks to the different perspectives that were always introduced, everyone was able to gain an insight into a variety of hospitals and health systems. Making international contacts is another great benefit of this great program. These connections have not only resulted in professional partnerships and interchange, but also personal friendships. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible for the meetings to be held face to face. A personal meeting of the whole YEL 2020 group is planned at the 2021 IHF World Hospital Congress in Barcelona, Spain.

With these points in mind, this experience has managed to improve our sense of collaboration and communication by always supporting each other, while also sharing challenges. We reminded each other of the dates for submitting assignments, via sending Whatsapp or email messages. We also encouraged the participation of each member in the virtual meetings, article formation and discussions.

YEL 2020 was complicated with COVID-19 crisis, our articles were centered on how did this crisis affect the leadership and how artificial intelligence helped in overcoming the challenges created out of social distancing and measures to reduce spreading infection. We shared our institutional experiences and challenges that affected the HCP and the patients in the 8 articles along with the deficits and the way to overcome these challenges. This will give the world a start point to continue to improve the services and discuss further new strategies in the coming years.

We as the Steering Committee used to meet once every two weeks to discuss the progress of each group, what new challenges we faced and how we can together overcome it. We shared the success of each step as well as celebrated the achievements together.

Through this experience, we took away three key lessons learned. First, the COVID-19 pandemic set the context for our work together, and showed us that no matter where in the world, what type of organization you work for, or what your particular role in leadership is, we all share similar challenges, which have been more than ever this year. We face these challenges because our goal is the same – to serve and treat patients with the best possible care. Over the past several months, we have formed friendships and bonds with one another that would have otherwise unlikely evolved naturally. These connections will remain with us as we enter the YEL alumni, and we have learned through this year that we must rely on one another for support to get through the tough times and to celebrate the good times. This network gives us the peer to ask advice from, learn from, visit (safely in the future!) and with whom we can share good news and support one another. With this in mind, the third and final lesson that many of us took away from the program was the opportunity to continue building this network into potential collaborations farther in the future.

As we wrap up our time in the program, we are not only looking back on a very positive experience but also very much looking forward to joining the alumni with last year's inaugural group. We intend to remain active with IHF YEL to support the development of this program and its benefit to future healthcare leaders. In addition, we look forward to continuing to participate and contribute to the broader IHF community.

If you are interested in the YEL initiative, please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us to discuss further. Applications for the 2021 cohort are available here for submission by January 25<sup>th</sup>. We look forward to meeting young leaders who are enthusiastic and willing to devote some time and work to participate the activities and make connections with other leaders worldwide.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to our 2020 YEL cohort (see above). Finally, we are grateful to Sylvia Basterrechea, Ronald Lavater, and Eric de Roodenbeke at IHF for their support and mentorship.