

24th European Congress of Internal Medicine (ECIM)

March 25-28, 2026

Vienna, Austria

ACP Global Ambassador reflections by: James Whitfill, MD, FACP

Serving as an ACP Global Ambassador was a tremendous experience for me, both personally and professionally. Over the past 2 decades, much of my work as a physician leader has focused on developing relationships and expertise in clinical informatics, imaging informatics, and the use of technology in health care. As a result, many of the national and international conferences I have attended have been centered on these fields rather than internal medicine. The opportunity to contribute to the European Congress of Internal Medicine (ECIM) in Vienna, Austria, as well as to participate in the ACP Internal Medicine Meeting in San Francisco, California, gave me the chance to build new professional and personal connections in new geographies and across a broader range of internal medicine specialties. In many ways it felt like coming home to my original specialty of internal medicine.

One of the most striking aspects of the experience was seeing how conversations about artificial intelligence (AI) in medicine differ between Europe and the United States. The contrast was substantive enough that my copresenter and collaborator, Dr. Christel Gérardin, MD, PhD, and I have begun drafting a paper exploring how different constraints in different global regions are shaping AI policy, adoption, and clinical implementation. That kind of insight emerged directly from the Global Ambassador experience and has already influenced how I think about the global evolution of AI in health care.

I was also struck by the way different nations and professional societies across Europe came together at the ECIM. Culturally, it was fascinating to see such a mixture of languages, national perspectives, and health care systems functioning together around a shared professional identity. At the same time, when I attended educational sessions on topics such as GLP-1 therapies, weight management, or complex rheumatologic illness, the commonality of internal medicine felt immediately familiar. The clinical challenges, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to patient care were recognizable across borders.

Compared with U.S. meetings, the ECIM had a formality to it that I have also seen in professional society meetings in countries like Singapore. In both cases, the respect for academic accomplishment and the use of ceremony is something I find really inspiring. To that end, being named a Fellow of the European Federation of Medicine (EFIM) was something of great value to me. I wore my fellowship tie when copresenting in San Francisco as a signal to my EFIM colleagues of the impact they had on me in Vienna.

Another highlight was the opportunity to speak with young professionals about career development. Across the globe, I find that the transition from full-time clinician to health care leader is a universal challenge. There is no single book, course, or formal pathway that fully prepares physicians for that shift, yet there is a strong desire among physicians internationally to grow into leadership roles. It was rewarding to share reflections from my own career and to hear how early career physicians in other countries are navigating similar questions about identity, opportunity, and impact.

The setting in Vienna also added meaning to the experience. Touring the remarkable architecture and historical infrastructure of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a memorable reminder of the region's influence and complexity. At a time when global relationships can feel dynamic, uncertain, and, at times, frayed, it was personally inspiring to see physicians, educators, and professional societies from different cultures coming together around shared goals in medical education, clinical excellence, and professional development.

I would strongly recommend the Global Ambassador experience to colleagues. It is an opportunity not only to represent ACP but also to listen, learn, and see internal medicine through a broader international lens. I would absolutely consider participating again in the future.



