



# World Digestive Health Day

May 29th 2008 represented the 50th anniversary of the formation of the World Gastroenterology Foundation (previously OMGE). Each year on this day the organisation celebrates World Digestive Health Day and uses the platform to highlight an important topic. This year's theme was Optimal Health and Nutrition with the aim being to encourage governments to make nutrition a global priority. Danone partnered WGO in this endeavour.

As part of the activities to celebrate this day, to educate doctors and other allied professionals, world wide video-conferencing was organised. We were lucky to be one of the 27 countries participating in this. Danone organised a very successful video-conference which took place at the business centre in the Michaelangelo Hotel in Sandton. As well as local gastroenterologists and dieticians, we were joined by Gill Watermeyer from Cape Town who has a particular interest in this area. We had a link to Professor Eamonn Quigley who as well as teaching us some of the history of the WGO and its future plans gave an excellent talk on probiotics with an informative question and answer session at the end. It was particularly nice to have Professor Quigley as the guest speaker as many of us had met him previously on various

Train the Trainers courses run by WGO.

In the talk he covered many of the areas where the use of probiotics have been utilised - post infectious diarrhoea, inflammatory bowel disease (particularly pouchitis), resistant pseudomembranous colitis and IBS. The important points which were highlighted included the much improved research studies and techniques which are now being utilised, the importance of having probiotics which have been shown to remain alive during their shelf-life and passage through the gut. It is also important that the probiotic prescribed must be disease and dose specific. Generally studies with probiotics have shown them to be safe. It is an exciting area of gastroenterology where I think over the next few years we will learn much more.

To coincide with this day WGO have released guidelines on probiotics and prebiotics which are available on their website. ([www.worldgastroenterology.org](http://www.worldgastroenterology.org))

Thanks to Danone and WGO for a very informative evening.

**Kay Karlsson**