

International Secretary and Research Secretary Report for 2003/2004

Dr Jean Karl SOLER

This short report is intended to inform College members on the activities of the Secretary for Research and International affairs. This follows a formal request by Council to elected officials to forward formal reports on their activities on a regular basis.

This first report combines the activities of the Secretary for Research and for International Affairs. This is because there is significant overlap in these activities, certainly with regard to international activities. The report details activities from the election of Dr Jean Karl Soler to the present College Council, and his appointment to the posts of International and Research Secretary, till the end of 2004.

College representation at International Conferences

In Malta

Soon after election to Council, Dr. J. K. Soler was involved in the organisation of the World Organisation of Family Doctors (Wonca) International Classification Committee (WICC) meeting in Malta in October 2003. Dr. Soler has been a member of this committee on a personal basis since 1998. The WICC is the body that produces and maintains the International Classification of Primary Care (ICPC) that is the officially recommended classification for family medicine in Malta endorsed by the College. This prestigious international meeting was held at the Forum Hotel in October 2003, and the College Council and the Department of Family Medicine were officially invited to attend a joint session with the WICC. This session was unfortunately poorly attended, with Drs Pierre Mallia, Mario R Sammut and J. K. Soler attending and presenting the activities of the College, past and present, to our international guests. The Maltese study of the epidemiology of General Practice, Transhis, was also presented at the meeting. WICC members Prof. Dr. Henk Lamberts and Dr. Inge Okkes have been instrumental in the development of this project locally, and have given College members the excellent electronic patient record (EPR) program Transhis, which includes ICPC-2-E. In fact Maltese doctors were amongst the first in the world to use ICPC-2-E in EPR.

In October 2004, Malta was fortunate to be able to host the European General Practice Research Network again. In fact we had a Research Methods Course organised at the Forum Hotel,

and then a full EGPRN meeting in Gozo immediately afterwards. This Research Methods Course was different from its sister course run in Malta in 1999 in that it was part of the first module of a Master of Sciences in Primary Care and General Practice organised in collaboration with the University of Ulster. The course ran for five full days and was attended by more than 15 doctors including three Italians and one German GP. The theme of the EGPRN workshop was "Research using Electronic Patient Records in GP". The workshop started with two pre-conference workshops on EPR, one led by Maltese GP Mario R Sammut. Dr. J. K. Soler had the honour to share the opening keynote speech with Dr. Douglas Fleming. The meeting was well attended, and four Maltese GPs and two Gozitan GPs were present. Drs. Mario R Sammut, A Mifsud and Mark Rosso also addressed the meeting. A more detailed report has been submitted for publication in this journal.

Abroad

Here follows a list of international events where the College's interests were represented by the International and Research secretariat in the person of Dr. J. K. Soler:

- A closed meeting between WICC members and World WONCA Executive at the WONCA Europe 2003 meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in June 2003, dealing with ICPC
- An EGPRN workshop at the WONCA Europe 2003 meeting in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in June 2003
- The eHID expert workshop at the Scientific Institute of Public Health, Brussels, Belgium, February 2004. This workshop dealt with the collection of data from EPR.
- A Workshop on the International Study of Burnout in European Family Doctors at the EGPRN meeting in Antwerp, Belgium in May 2004
- The WONCA Europe Executive Council meetings in Ljubljana, Slovenia 2003 and Amsterdam, The Netherlands in 2004, where Dr. Soler represented the College.
- A meeting of European Medical journal editors discussing the future of the European Journal of General Practice at the

WONCA Europe Amsterdam meeting, June 2004. At this meeting Dr. Soler applied, and was eventually accepted, to the new Editorial Advisory Board of the Journal.

- A meeting of WONCA Europe Network organisation members discussing the future of the Network Organisations collaboration at the WONCA Europe Amsterdam meeting, June 2004
- The “Multilingual Mapping of Diagnostic Concepts in ICPC-2 and ICD-10” invitational closed Spinoza workshop in collaboration with the Academic Medical Centre, University of Amsterdam and the National Library of Medicine, Washington, at the AMC in Amsterdam, June 4-7 2004. Here Dr. Soler represented Malta and announced the Maltese translation of the short titles of ICPC-2-E.
- The inaugural meeting of the working group between the WONCA International Classification Committee (WICC) and the World Health Organisation Family of Classifications network (WHO-FIC) at the Academic Medical Centre, University of Amsterdam, June 7 2004. This meeting discussed the inclusion of ICPC in the WHO Family of Classifications.
- The WONCA (World Organisation of Family Doctors) International Classification Committee (WICC) meetings in Malta in October 2003 and in Trondheim, Norway in 2004
- The EGPRN meetings in Verona –Italy, Antwerp-Belgium and Gozo-Malta

One should state that all Dr. Soler’s local and international travel is at his personal expense, and is not subsidised by the College in any way. Dr. Soler does receive some support for travel to WICC workshops directly from World Wonca.

Projects

Research projects

Three important projects have been implemented with the support or collaboration of the MCFD Research Secretariat.

In November 2003, College members Drs. Tanya Melillo, Isabel Stabile, Mario R Sammut and Dr. J. K. Soler founded the Malta Family Practice Research Network. The aim of this group is “to develop research in family practice in Malta” and to change GPs’ ‘need for’ research into ‘want to’ research. The group has organised a College research symposium in July 2004, and has supported the EGPRN meeting in Gozo.

The Maltese arm of the Transition project has now collected four years of data from the EPR Transhis used by Drs. Carmen Sammut, Mario R Sammut, Frank P Calleja, David Cefai, Joseph Grech Attard, David Sammut, Daniel Sammut, John Buhagiar, Jason Bonnici and Jean Karl Soler. These doctors use the program

to record all their contacts with patients, recording reasons for the encounter presented by the patient, their interventions (including tests and prescriptions, with a full record of drugs prescribed and test results) and their diagnostic labels. A formal report of the project is planned for the European Journal of General Practice. However, the results of the first year of data collection are available in the publication “Sick leave certification: an unwelcome administrative burden for the family doctor? The role of sickness certification in Maltese family practice” published in the June 2004 edition of the journal with the co-authorship of Dr. Jean Karl Soler and Dr. Inge Okkes, and the invaluable support of Prof. Dr. Henk Lamberts.¹

The International study of burnout in GP has been funded by the European Society of GP and the EGPRN (it was in fact the first project to be joint funded in this way). The study has been coordinated by Hakan Yaman from Turkey and Dr. J. K. Soler, and involved the development of a tool to study burnout, which included both the Maslach Burnout Inventory² and a questionnaire on doctor characteristics and job satisfaction. This large study required two study arms, and in fact one can proudly state that both the pilot study and the main study were performed in more than 14 European Countries, including Malta. The results of the main study have been discussed at an EGPRN workshop in Antwerp in May 2004 and should be published soon, whilst the pilot study results have been published in Australia.³ The pilot study indicated that 50% of respondents had high emotional exhaustion (EE) scores, 30% high depersonalisation (DP), and 41% low feelings of personal accomplishment (PA). Preliminary results from the main study seem to confirm this, with 50% high EE, 35% high DP, and 37% low PA.

International projects

One major international project involved the recent translation of the ICPC-2-E into Maltese. This translation is available free on the web for personal use.⁴ Thanks go to Mrs. Ritianne Schembri for her crucial input helping Dr. J. K. Soler produce this translation.

Finally, since October 2004 we are fortunate to have the first local MSc in Primary Care and General Practice running in collaboration with the University of Ulster, Northern Ireland, UK. Fifteen participants have completed the first module by January 2005. This is the first MSc in General Practice which is running between two countries, and it involved the EGPRN research methods course which was the first to comply with the Brisbane Initiative for teaching research methods. Twelve Maltese, two Italian and one German GP have participated to date, and the second module has started in February 2005. More details are included in another article that has been submitted to this journal.

Conculsion

In summary, the College International and Research Secretariat has been very active in 2003/4, with numerous activities that promise direct and indirect benefits for college members.

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References

- 1 JK Soler, IM Okkes. "Sick leave certification: an unwelcome administrative burden for the family doctor? The role of sickness certification in Maltese family practice" *European Journal of General Practice* 2004; 10:2: 50-55 (June 2004)
- 2 Maslach C, Jackson S E. Maslach burnout inventory. 2nd edn. Pal Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1986.
- 3 H Yaman, JK Soler. "The Job Related Burnout Questionnaire A multinational pilot study." *Australian Family Physician* 2002; Vol. 31, No. 11: 1055-6. (November 2002)
- 4 International Classification of Primary Care, Version 2 Electronic (ICPC-2-E) Maltese translation. <http://www.globalfamilydoctor.com/wicc/pagers.html>



Forthcoming Events

Malta College of Family Doctors

CPD Programme January - June 2006

January 2006

Winter CPD Meeting
Community Child Health Update
Date 28th January 2006
Venue: Westin Dragonara Resort St Julians 9:30-16:30

February-March 2006

Membership Development Day
A day workshop/seminar with the participation of British/Irish Colleges, to explore path to introduction of MRCGP(Int) to Maltese family doctors

Spring 2006

Social event- gala dinner - presentation of Accreditation certificates. Event still to be confirmed