

THE MCFD'S PARTICIPATION AT THE ESGP/FM - WONCA EUROPE CONFERENCE '02

MARIO R. SAMMUT

INTRODUCTION

The Malta College of Family Doctors (MCFD) was represented at the 2002 Conference of the European Society of General Practice / Family Medicine (ESGP/FM) – the European Region of the World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA Europe). The conference was entitled 'Promoting Excellence in Family Medicine', and took place on 9-13 June 2002 in London, U.K. under the auspices of the Royal College of General Practitioners during its 50th anniversary year. The MCFD representatives were Dr Denis Soler, College President, and Dr Mario R Sammut, Honorary Secretary, who made their own financial arrangements to attend.

WONCA Europe Council Meeting

As a member of the Council of WONCA Europe, Dr Denis Soler participated actively in the council meeting that took place on the 9th June 2002. Among the topics discussed were the future use and implementation of the new definition and core competences of family medicine / general practice (see below) which were launched by the society at the conference.

The European definition of family medicine / general practice

General practice / family medicine is an academic and scientific discipline, with its own educational content, research, evidence base and clinical activity, and a clinical speciality orientated to primary care.

The characteristics of the discipline of general practice/family medicine are that it:

- a) is normally the point of first medical contact within the health care system, providing open and unlimited access to its users, dealing with all health problems regardless of the age, sex, or any other characteristic of the person concerned.
- b) makes efficient use of health care resources through co-ordinating care, working with other professionals in the primary care setting, and by managing the interface with other specialities taking an advocacy role for the patient when needed.
- c) develops a person-centred approach, orientated to the individual, his/her family, and their community.

- d) has a unique consultation process, which establishes a relationship over time, through effective communication between doctor and patient
- e) is responsible for the provision of longitudinal continuity of care as determined by the needs of the patient.
- f) has a specific decision making process determined by the prevalence and incidence of illness in the community.
- g) manages simultaneously both acute and chronic health problems of individual patients.
- h) manages illness which presents in an undifferentiated way at an early stage in its development, which may require urgent intervention.
- i) promotes health and well being both by appropriate and effective intervention.
- j) has a specific responsibility for the health of the community.
- k) deals with health problems in their physical, psychological, social, cultural and existential dimensions.

(Ref.: WONCA Europe, 2002. The European Definition of General Practice / Family Medicine. Copies of this booklet are available from Dr Mario R Sammut on mcfid@synapse.net.mt)

Conference

The professional and scientific programme presented at the conference considered the variety of environments in which family practitioners work and the impact these environments have on patient care. Seven key themes were focused upon:

1. International cooperation in primary care research;
2. Core values, philosophy and aspirations in family practice;
3. Effective clinical practice in partnership with patients;
4. General practice / family medicine as a career;
5. Informatics and health;
6. Promoting quality in primary care;

7. Developments in the organisation and delivery of primary care.

Dr Mario R Sammut in fact presented two **personal papers** under the last of these seven themes - 'Developments in the organisation and delivery of primary care':

- An Evaluation of the Organisation and Delivery of Smoking Cessation Services in Maltese Primary Care;
- Primary Care in Malta: Provision, Problems and Proposals for Reform.

Dr. Sammut also participated in the following **joint presentations**:

- Prevention and Health Promotion in Clinical Practice: Final Results of the EUROPREV Survey, under the theme 'International Cooperation in Primary Care Research';
- Tobacco Cessation in Primary Care: Developing National and International Strategies, under the theme of 'Promoting Quality in Primary Care';
- Update in Prevention and Health Promotion by National Colleges in Primary Care: From Recommendations to Implementation (on behalf of Dr Artur Mierzecki), also under the theme of 'Promoting Quality in Primary Care'.

Moreover, Dr Sammut was invited to be **chairperson** of a session entitled 'Values Across Cultures' under the theme of 'Core Values, Philosophy and Aspirations in Family Practice'. He also took part in the following **meetings and workshops**:

- Council Meeting of EUROPREV - European Network on Prevention and Health Promotion in Family Medicine, in his capacity as member of the EUROPREV coordinating group;
- Open Meeting of EURACT - European Academy of Teachers in General Practice;
- Motivate Healthy Behaviours: Developing CPD Programmes;
- Research in General Practice across Europe: Getting Started and Keeping Going.

Recommendations for promoting research in general practice in Europe

Arising from the last workshop, the following recommendations were agreed:

1. Lists of current/ongoing research projects need to be made easily available and 'searchable' on-line (e.g. through the websites of the European General Practice Research Workshop and the Royal College of General Practitioners), with a brief description of each project and the contact details of the researcher/s.

2. Universities, Departments and Colleges of Family Medicine need to:

- a) Provide teaching in research methods (e.g. self-directed courses) followed by mentoring and support;
- b) Stimulate on-going research by including a small research project in GP training programmes and CME curricula;
- c) Put pressure on governments to provide funding and protected time for research.

Closing ceremony

The highlight of the closing ceremony was an entertaining audio-visual presentation made by Prof. Igor Svab inviting participants to the 9th ESGP/FM Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 18 - 21 June 2003, with the theme of 'The Future Challenges of General Practice / Family Medicine'. If interested, please visit the conference website at <http://www.woncaeurope2003.org> for more details.



Dr Mario R Sammut, Mrs Marie Soler and Dr Denis Soler (left to right) in front of the Maltese flag before the start of the opening ceremony at WONCA Europe 2002.