

**FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 2009:**

**Location :** Hotel Lacroma, Dubrovnik

**08.50 - 09.10: 1<sup>st</sup> Keynote Speaker: *Professor Chris van Weel, PhD* – The Netherlands.**

**Theme: “Research on Multimorbidity in General Practice”.**

Research for Care, Care for Research.

Reflections on the Challenges of Multi-Morbidity for General Practice.

The traditional perception of the scientific mission of general practice pictures the need of amending the quality and performance of an ailing discipline, through research. More rigorous biomedical research was promoted in this respect. There is no reason to question the strong positive influence of research on the development of general practice and primary care. But at the same time, it is clear that through research the perceptions of the problems and challenges of patient care have changed. Rather than general practice and primary care as the defunct domains of medical practice, it is now widely acknowledged that biomedicine with its overemphasized disease perspectives, is in a crisis. In the strategy to cope with this crisis, core values of general practice come to the rescue – notably person centeredness, continuity of care and the community and context orientation. As a consequence, the interaction of ‘general practice and research’ has led to the understanding that to change patient care there is a need to change the prevailing research culture.

Multimorbidity, or co-morbidity, may serve as a case in point to understand how general practice has ‘revolutionized’ medical research. This presentation will illustrate this and focus on:

- From omnipotent science and deficient patient care to a partnership for new practice; or how practice can be miles ahead of research.
- From ivory tower to the village green – ‘societal impact’ and external validity as markers of the quality of research.
- The human perspective – how knowing the patient with the disease may be as important as knowing the disease the patient has.
- The place of social determinants.

**SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 2009:**

**Location : Hotel Lacroma, Dubrovnik**

**09.10 – 09.30: 2<sup>nd</sup> Keynote Speaker: *Professor Milica Katic* – Croatia.**

**Theme: “Family Medicine Research in Croatia: State of the art and future challenges”.**

The long and fruitful tradition of public health- and community-oriented research work of the “Andrija Stampar” School of Public Health is one of the fundamentals of the Family Medicine Research in Croatia. The second cornerstone of the development of research activities was instituting specialisation in General Practice /Family Medicine in 1960, which by its very nature led to the need for further research and, in turn, resulted in further development of family medicine as a discipline, including research. Another significant factor fostering research activities in Croatia is the long tradition of Croatian presence in EGPRN: professor Vladimir Grahovac became the national representative in EGPRN in the early eighties, collaborated in several EGPRN international studies and initiated great improvement of research activities in general practice /family medicine in Croatia.

The development of primary care research capacity in Croatia mainly followed the policy recommended by the “Kingston report” and by the Research Agenda for Primary Health Care /General Practice in Europe.

In 1980, the Department of Family Medicine of the “Andrija Stampar “School of Public Health, Medical School of the University of Zagreb was founded, followed by the establishment of the departments of family medicine at medical schools in Rijeka, Osijek and Split.

The most prominent General Practitioners were retained as teachers at the departments of family medicine and those who were interested in research participated in numerous studies carried out in Croatia or in international studies (Interface between primary and secondary care, Referral study, Health monitoring study, Burnout study, etc). They were recognised as the national general practice /family medicine research network which includes around 120 GPs. In 1996, the Department of Family Medicine Medical School University of Zagreb and Croatian Association of Family Medicine established the Croatian Family Medicine Research Club, which represents this network formally.

Within the ongoing project “Adjusting Family Medicine with European Standards”, all doctors working in the family medicine service are supposed to be specialised by the year 2015. “Research in Family Medicine” is a mandatory course within the residency programme, where each trainee is obliged to perform a small supervised project. The goal of this course is to increase trainees’ likelihood of conducting and capacity to conduct research. In the period from 2003 to 2008, almost 600 small diploma projects were performed by trainees and around 20% of them were either presented at conferences and congresses or published in a national journal, while several were published in international journals.

Also, Croatia has professional associations of family medicine holding congresses, which allow researchers to present their work. In addition, the Croatian Association of Family Medicine published the journal “ *Medicina Familiaris Croatica* “.

As in other countries, descriptive epidemiological studies were the main area of research interest in the beginning. Later on, the leading research topics were specificity of general

practice (organisation, morbidity in GP, workload, prescribing, referral etc). Health system research also became one of the most relevant topics due to substantial socio-economic changes occurring in Croatia after the war.

In the future, Family Medicine Research in Croatia will mainly be focused on the specific core content of General Practice, which is the basis for specific research domains (research on clinical issues, health service research and research on education and teaching in general practice).

Among the well known significant barriers for GPs' participation in research activities, such as lack of time, funding, and research skills, in Croatia we also faced an additional obstacle. Around 80% of all doctors working in Family Medicine Service are independent contractors with Croatian Institute for Health Insurance and work alone in a single-handed practice. Their position in the health system forces them to devote a great majority of their energy and time for running their practices, thus diminishing their research output.

Further development of the Family Medicine Research in Croatia mainly depends on changes in organisation and financing of the health system, on strengthening the academic general practice, formal and informal education of research and stronger co-operation among professional organisations, academic departments of Family Medicine and other medical disciplines in planning and execution of research projects, and improvement of international collaboration.

Guided by this vision, the Croatian general practice research community expects that the Dubrovnik EGPRN conference will help us make these expectations more achievable and successful.

**SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 2009:**

**Location : Hotel Lacroma, Dubrovnik**

**08.45 – 09.05: 3<sup>rd</sup> Keynote Speaker: *Professor Igor Svab* – Slovenia.**

**Theme: “Research Challenges in Family Medicine in Changing Europe”.**

Although it is one of the wealthiest regions, Europe is also a continent of vast diversities. This is true for all areas of human activity, including medicine. Also in family medicine, there are countries with well established academic departments of family medicine, with developed research infrastructure and stable research funding, but also countries that are only beginning to develop its research potential. This is big, and is hardly ever achieved. With growing emphasis on primary care and family medicine, there is a need to support family medicine research in all these situations, which requires different approaches.

Frequent pitfalls of family medicine research, especially in its early stages of development are:

1. inadequate research funding: most research in family medicine is still either under funded or funded according to the wrong criteria (usually funding is based on number of publications and not on relevance to patient care)
2. inadequate research priorities: although research may be funded appropriately, the priorities in research are decided by payers that do not take into account the specificities and potentials of family medicine.
3. lack of self-confidence and expertise: especially newly established departments and research departments tend to pursue research ideas that would be different from the principles of family medicine, using research methodology and approaches that are not suitable for the problems they are addressing.
4. the academic-practical split: quite often family medicine departments work separately from practising physicians.

The role of Wonca Europe is to be aware of these problems and to promote the scientific aspects of family medicine on a global level. Because of that, Wonca Europe has promoted the development of a series of documents on principles of family medicine: the European definition, the Teaching agenda, and recently the Research agenda for general practice. These documents have a potential to make a change in this aspect and to help the family doctors and the policy makers to develop and defend proper research proposals that would be more in line with the problems of practising physicians and their patients.