



30 December 2009

Dear Colleagues,

At the end of the year, I would like to bring greetings from Wonca to you and your members, and wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy 2010. The commitment of your organization is most important to pursue successfully Wonca's global mission. On behalf of the Wonca Executive, CEO and Secretariat, I wish to thank you for your support.

For Wonca, 2009 has been a busy year. As an organization, we participated as (co)-organizers in no less than seven conferences. Regional Wonca conferences took place in Muscat (Oman), in January, San Juan (Puerto Rico) in April, Hong Kong in June, Basel (Switzerland) in September, and Rustenburg (South Africa) in October, and all drew large numbers of participants. In May, the Second Conference on Person Centered Medicine took place in Geneva, and in June the Rural Doctors met in large numbers in Heraklion, Crete. This may signal the growth and strength of Family Medicine and Primary Health Care around the world.

But the undisputed high of the year for me was the unanimous adoption by the World Health Assembly of a resolution to promote Primary Health Care. This reiterates the WHO's commitment to primary health care and the visionary statements of Alma Ata of 1978. But in this resolution, for which Wonca, TUFH and other global primary care organizations campaigned hard, a much more specific definition of primary health care development is formulated. It specifies nurses, midwives and family physicians as the professional bearers of the primary health care team, and calls for their training. It is good to realize that this is the statement – not of primary care – but of 192 national governments.

Another important development was the introduction in Index Medicus, of a Subject Heading 'primary health care, including family medicine'. For the first time, journals with a research and science mission in the domain of primary health care, are now ordered in their own right. This opens the possibility of better bibliographic analysis and monitoring of primary care research – essential for the furthering of primary care research capacity. An important item on the agenda is now to convince the large science publications like ISI Web of Knowledge of Thompson Reuters, to follow this. Hopefully more news here in 2010!

This stresses the importance for Wonca to collaborate closer with university departments of primary care/family medicine, research institutes and training



programs. The new Wonca Membership Category ‘Academic Members’ was introduced at the end of 2008 and has drawn its first responses. I look forward to see the large majority – if not all – of these institutes to join us.

Last year, I reported that the growing emphasis on primary care development around the world marks a clear success of Wonca. But this success comes with a growing demand for our organization to deliver our expertise and knowledge, around the world. And this is the shadow of our success, the growth in activities are putting a strain on Wonca’s financial and organizational viability. The global economic and financial crisis has done little to improve this. Early in the year, the Wonca Executive started a review of the finances and operations of the organization. The results will be presented at the Cancun World Council.

And this brings me to the coming year: an exciting year for Wonca, with the 19th Wonca World Conference due to take place in Mexico: with Cancun from May 19th – 23rd as the meeting place of the World of Primary Care. Our Mexican hosts are preparing a fabulous conference in a fabulous conference surrounding. It will also be the place for important decisions at a Council that will shape the future of Wonca. Only when we are able to bring together the best women and men to lead primary care; organize a robust organization that allows for more frequent meetings to shape the academic policy and advocacy for primary care; and make sure Wonca can sit at the table with those deciding primary care, will it be possible to capitalize on our collective potential. No mean issues at stake, in other words, at the upcoming Council. Cancun will signal the time to act on this, including substantial changes in the structure and bylaws of Wonca.

A busy and exciting year lays before us: I look forward to see you all at the Council and Conference in Cancun in May, and I wish you a very happy and rewarding 2010!

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