

Reports from the colleges

WONCA

What is Wonca?

Wonca is an unusual, yet convenient acronym comprising the first five initials of the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians. Wonca's short name is World Organization of Family Doctors.

Constitution of Wonca

Wonca is made up of national colleges, academies or organisations concerned with the academic aspects of general family practice. Beginning with 18 members in 1972, there are now 120 member organisations in 99 countries. This includes ten organisations in collaborative relations with Wonca. In all, the total membership of the member organisations of Wonca is over 250 000 general practitioners/family physicians.

Wonca represents and acts as an advocate for its constituent members at an international level where it interacts with world bodies such as the World Health Organization.

Wonca's mission

The mission of Wonca is to improve the quality of life of the peoples of the world through defining and promoting its values, and by fostering and maintaining high standards of care in general practice/family medicine by promoting personal, comprehensive and continuing care for the individual in the context of the family and the community, encouraging and supporting the development of academic organisations of general practitioners/family physicians, providing a forum for exchange of knowledge and information between member organisations of general practitioners/family physicians, and representing the educational, research and service provision activities of general practitioners/family physicians before other world organisations and forums concerned with health and medical care.

Who runs Wonca?

A Council comprising the representatives of member organisations and the officers of Wonca governs Wonca. It meets every three years at the time of Wonca world conferences. A small Executive Committee meets twice yearly to conduct the business of the organisation between Council meetings. The members of the Executive include the World President, President Elect, Immediate Past President, three Members at Large and Regional Presidents from each of the seven Wonca regions: Africa, North America, Asia Pacific, Europe, Middle East South Asia, Iberoamericana-CIMF and Wonca East Mediterranean Region (protem). The Wonca World Secretariat has been located in Singapore since 1 May 2001.

What does Wonca do?

Wonca has an impact on the world of general practice/family medicine through its World Council and its Regional Councils in the seven regions. It has committees on membership, finance, bylaws, publications and communications, and working groups on the classification of problems encountered in general family practice, rural practice, quality assurance, informatics, education, communications and publications, research, health behaviour change, tobacco cessation, women and family medicine, mental health, and respiratory diseases. There are special interest groups on ethical issues in general practice, travel medicine and elderly care. These groups comprise hundreds of family doctors who meet three yearly, sometimes more often, and in between work by correspondence. Over the years they have carried out groundbreaking studies and research, and have produced a variety of important publications.

Relations with other bodies

Wonca has official relations with the World Health Organization as a non-governmental organisation and is engaged in a number of collaborative projects.

World and regional conferences

Wonca world conferences take place once every three years. These are major occasions for family doctors to present papers, discuss issues and enhance their professional networks. More recent world conferences were held in 2001 in Durban, South Africa; 2004 in Orlando; and 2007 in Singapore. The 2010 World Conference will be held in Cancun, Mexico.

Regional conferences have been held for many years, and more recently at the following venues:

2005 – Kos (Greece), Kyoto (Japan), Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Vancouver (Canada)
 2006 – Florence (Italy), Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Bangkok (Thailand)
 2007 – Paris (France)
 2008 – Melbourne (Australia) and Istanbul (Turkey)
 2009 – San Juan (Puerto Rico), Hong Kong (China), Basel (Switzerland) and Rustenburg (South Africa)

Future regional conferences have been confirmed at the following venues:

2010 – Malaga (Spain)
 2011 – Cebu (Philippines) and Warsaw (Poland)
 2012 – Jeju (Korea) and Vienna (Austria)

Wonca's more recent publications

2008 – *Integrating Mental Health into Primary Care, A Global Perspective* (Joint collaboration with WHO)
 2005 – *International Classification of Primary Care ICPC-2-R* (revised 2nd edition)
 2003 – *Wonca Dictionary of General/Family Practice*
 2002 – *Improving Health Systems: the contribution of family medicine – a guidebook* (Joint collaboration with WHO)

Wonca News, published six times a year.

Wonca website: www.GlobalFamilyDoctor.com

The website contains useful information on Wonca, working groups, membership, excellent interactive education, conferences, publications, research, internet resources and the Wonca shop.

Wonca Membership

There are several types of Wonca membership as follows:

Membership for organisations

Full Membership is for national organisations or a group of national organisations which are representative of general practitioners/family physicians of that country and a majority of whose constituent voting membership consists of general practitioners/family physicians who are legally registered to practise within that country or those countries.

Associate Membership is for national organisations or a group of national organisations which are representative of general practitioners/family physicians of that country or those countries not seeking Wonca Full Membership, or which are deemed by the Wonca Council not to fulfill the requirements for Full Membership.

Academic Membership

Academic departments and training programmes of general practice/family medicine which are actively involved in teaching and research and which support the Wonca's mission and desire affiliation may apply for Wonca Academic Membership.

Wonca Direct Membership

Since Wonca first began, many family doctors have expressed a desire to belong to Wonca individually, although they were already indirect members through their national college or academy. The category of Direct Membership was created to enable individual family doctors to associate directly with Wonca.

The future

Wonca's global plan is to further its prime objective of improving the health of the peoples of the world, through fostering and maintaining high standards of care in general practice/family medicine. Wonca recognises though that many developing nations cannot afford a full complement of well-trained family physicians. However, all nations can afford to adopt the concept of family medicine for all its primary healthcare workers. By so doing, the quality of health care can be improved substantially.

In particular, Wonca wishes to encourage and support the development of academic organisations of general practitioners/family physicians. Wonca has made steady progress in this regard since its inception in 1972, but this has accelerated in the

last few years. There are now some 120 organisations in 100 countries.

When all that is planned by Wonca is added to that which has been accomplished already, continuing improvement of the health of the peoples of the world, Wonca's prime mission, can be anticipated in the years ahead.

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