



# NEWSLETTER

June 5th 2026



**WONCA Working Party on Planetary Health (WWPPH)**

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June 5th is [World Environment Day](#). The United Nations established it in 1972, the same year it created the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); the first observance took place in 1973.

## Our Newsletter June 5th 2026

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**Hi all!**

Welcome to our first newsletter

Our Working Party has reached **324 members!**

Curious about what your colleagues are up to? This newsletter is meant to be a quick read — a space to share our stories, news, publications, and projects, helping us cross-fertilize ideas and make networking and cooperation easier.

## Meet Our Chair



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*Dr. Sankha Randenikumara is a Family Physician and GP Educator from Sri Lanka, currently serving as Chair of the WONCA Working Party on Planetary Health.*

**Q: When did you decide to pursue Family Medicine?**

During my fourth year of medical school. Before that, I had been considering a career in surgery. Two factors influenced my decision.

First, I observed that many surgeons had very demanding professional lives and often struggled to maintain a healthy work–life balance. This made me reflect on the kind of career and lifestyle I wanted for myself.

Second, I became closely associated with the Department of Family Medicine at my medical school. As Treasurer of the Nature and Photography Club, I frequently met our staff advisor, Professor Antoinette Perera, then Chair Professor in Family Medicine, who became an important role model for me. Around the same time, I completed my fourth-year Family Medicine clinical attachment and discovered a discipline that aligned perfectly with my interests, values, and aspirations. It was then that I realised Family Medicine was the right path for me.

**Q: When did you first become involved with WONCA?**

My journey with WONCA began in February 2016, when Sri Lanka hosted the WONCA South Asia Regional Conference in Colombo. Helping to organise the conference as a very young doctor opened my eyes to the global Family Medicine community and the opportunities for learning, networking, and collaboration beyond national boundaries.

**Q: When did you decide to join the WONCA Working Party on Planetary Health?**

Later in 2016, I attended the WONCA World Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Given my long-standing passion for nature, biodiversity, and environmental conservation, I was naturally drawn to the pre-conference meeting of the then Working Party on the Environment.

What I discovered was a group of family physicians who shared a deep concern about the relationship between environmental change and human health. The discussions resonated strongly with my personal interests and professional values, and I decided to join.

**Q: What is your vision for your term as Chair of the WONCA Working Party on Planetary Health?**

My vision is to help make planetary health a core component of Family Medicine and primary care worldwide.

I hope to strengthen our Working Party as a vibrant global network that supports education, research, advocacy, and collaboration. Through initiatives such as webinars, newsletters, practice guidelines, research projects, and regional engagement, we aim to equip family doctors with the knowledge and tools needed to address planetary health challenges in their daily practice.

Ultimately, I hope to empower family doctors to become effective advocates for healthier people, more resilient communities, and a healthier planet. Planetary health should not be seen as an additional responsibility, but as an integral part of delivering high-quality, sustainable, and equitable primary care.

## WWPPH Last Month

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May was a busy month for our Working Party:

**World Family Doctor Day webinar (19 May).** Our Working Party hosted *Caring in the Digital Age: Compassion for Patients, Systems, and the Planet*, moderated by our Chair, Dr. Sankha Randenikumara, with simultaneous Spanish interpretation. Dr. Gabrielle Samuel (King's College London, UK) spoke on the hidden environmental impact of digital health, and Dr. Claire Brockbank (Family Physician, Botswana) on compassion beyond the screen: caring for patients and the planet. The webinar was very engaging and generated excellent discussions among participants. Warm thanks to Prof. Andy Haines for helping connect us with speakers — even

while he was in Geneva for the World Health Assembly, launching the report of the Pan-European Commission on Climate and Health.

**Wonca WEBINAR**  
World family doctors. Caring for people.

**CARING IN THE DIGITAL AGE:  
COMPASSION FOR PATIENTS,  
SYSTEMS, AND THE PLANET**

**THE HIDDEN ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT OF DIGITAL HEALTH**  
DR GABRIELLE SAMUEL  
KINGS COLLEGE LONDON, UK

**COMPASSION BEYOND THE  
SCREEN: CARING FOR PATIENTS  
AND THE PLANET**  
DR CLAIRE BROCKBANK  
FAMILY PHYSICIAN, BOTSWANA

**MODERATOR**  
DR SANKHA RANDENIKUMARA  
CHAIR, WONCA WORKING PARTY ON PLANETARY HEALTH

interpretación en español

**WORLD  
FAMILY  
DOCTOR  
DAY.**

**TUESDAY  
19 MAY 2026  
15:30 UTC**

**Global Planetary Health Guidelines for Family Doctors.** Led by Drs. Sonja Wicklum and Sankha Randenikumara, this is a key priority within the Working Party's action plan for the 2025–2027 biennium. The aim is a practical and adaptable set of guidelines to support family doctors in addressing planetary health challenges within their local contexts. The scoping phase is now open for members with relevant expertise (estimated contribution: about 30–40 hours over six months). [Sign up here.](#)

**Members connecting across regions.** Following the guidelines invitation and the webinar, Dr. Takafumi Sasaki (Japan Primary Care Association) reached out to explore how colleagues in Japan might contribute.

## Recent Publications by Our Members

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Piggott T, Saadat P, Herrmann A, Tetelbom Stein A, et al. *Integrating Planetary Health in Health Guidelines (GRADE Guidance 46)*. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 2026 (Epub ahead of print). [acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/ANNALS-25-04761](https://acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/ANNALS-25-04761). Co-authored by our member Prof. Airton Tetelbom Stein, this new GRADE guidance sets out how to incorporate planetary health into clinical, public health, and health policy guidelines.

Urrutia-Pereira M, Solé D, Winders T, Haahtela T, et al. *Nature prescription for patients with chronic respiratory diseases*. *World Allergy Organization Journal*, 2026;19(3):101351. [doi.org/10.1016/j.waojou.2026.101351](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.waojou.2026.101351). A scoping review by our colleague Dr. Marilyn Urrutia-Pereira and Prof. Tari Haahtela on green-space exposure as a complementary intervention in asthma and COPD care.

## Tell Us About Your Work

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Working on something in planetary health? A project, a publication, a local initiative? We'd love to feature it. Fill out our short form to tell us about your current activities and interests, and write to us with suggestions and contributions.

**Share your work — fill out the form:** [forms.gle/Rj3XrPKRwAsbThZ67](https://forms.gle/Rj3XrPKRwAsbThZ67)

## Our Team

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### Executive Committee

Chair: Dr. Sankha Randenikumara (Sri Lanka) · Past Chair: Assoc. Prof. Ozden Gokdemir (Turkey) · Provost: Dr. Alan Abelsohn (Canada) · Vice Chair: Dr. Terry Kemple (United Kingdom) · Young Doctor Liaison: Dr. Nathaly Velasquez (Peru)

### Regional Chairs

Africa: Dr. Claire Brockbank (Botswana) · Asia Pacific: Dr. Ming-Nan Lin (Taiwan) · East Mediterranean: Dr. Mona Osman (Lebanon) · Europe: Dr. Andree Rochfort (Ireland) · Iberoamerica: Dr. Zitlalli Portillo García (Mexico) · North America: Assoc. Prof. Sonja Wicklum (Canada) & Dr. Paula Henry (Trinidad and Tobago) · South Asia: Dr. Jyotika Gupta (India)

### Advisors

Prof. Sir Andy Haines (United Kingdom) · Prof. Enrique Barros (Brazil) · Dr. Alice McGushin (Australia) · Dr. Catherine Pendrey (Australia)

### Newsletter Reviewers

With thanks to the colleagues who offered to help with this newsletter, including Dr. Sean Patrick Owens, Dr. Maria Chansky, Dr. Paolo Lauriola, and Dr. F. Başkaya.

### Newsletter Editor

Enrique Falceto de Barros

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*Editorial and drafting support: Claude Opus 4.8 (Anthropic AI).*