

# How to develop the WONCA website to support family doctors in the use of eHealth: results of a survey

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The World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA) declares in its mission statement that it strives to “to improve the quality of life of the peoples of the world through defining and promoting its values, including respect for universal human rights and including gender equity, and by fostering high standards of care in general practice/family medicine”.<sup>1</sup> It tries to achieve this through a range of strategies, one of which involves the optimal implementation of what has become known as eHealth. Broadly speaking, this involves a range of technologies and services, including electronic health records, electronic communication between health care providers and between them and their patients, electronic health services for citizens, and clinical decision support, among others.

The WONCA Informatics Working Party (WIWP) conducted a survey in June 2014 which aimed to find out how the WONCA website could support the key competencies of family doctors as users of information technology (IT), and play a role in defining the functionalities of IT systems that support the work of family doctors. We report here the results of this survey.

## Methods

### *Questionnaire development*

In the questionnaire, eight statements on a range of eHealth topics were presented and respondents were asked to indicate how important each of them was to include on the WONCA website. These topics were developed by several members of the WIWP who brainstormed ideas for a questionnaire. The principal investigator (IK) formatted the questionnaire on the Webropol platform using a choice of responses based on a Likert scale from 1 – 5. The questionnaire concluded with one open-ended question on further expectations or suggestions for WIWP activities in the future.

### *Survey implementation*

An email with a link to the online survey instrument was sent to members of WIWP, leaders of WONCA Europe and WONCA groups and committees, and individual family physicians interested in eHealth. Altogether, the email was sent to 78 individuals.

### *Data analysis*

The analysis was limited to a description of response frequencies. From the free text responses, themes were identified and suggestions under each theme were counted.

## Results

### Responses

There were 49 responses to the survey which represents 62% of the number of people who were sent an emailed request to participate.

### Survey results

Eight statements were presented on a range of possible WIWP activities which could be included on the WONCA website, with respondents indicating how important each of these was to include. These statements are presented in Table 1 in rank order of importance to the respondents. The most important item was the describing the key functionalities that eHealth should provide for family doctors (rated 4.6), with the next item being the main competencies that family doctors needed to use them (rated 4.3).

Respondents also strongly favoured WIWP developing policies on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in primary care (rated 4.2). While respondents were keen on reviews and tips on useful informatics tools, there was less support for webinars and e-learning courses (rated 3.3).

**Table 1: Suggestions on what should be on a WONCA website concerning eHealth**

Statements on what the WONCA Informatics Working Party should make available on its website	Mean score on importance scale (1 = not at all important to 5 = very important)
1. Define key functionalities of informatics tools that support the GPs' key activities, in order to help GPs as decision-makers in choosing informatics tools and IT vendors in developing their products.	4.6
2. Define the key competencies of the GP as the user of informatics tools and provide information on ways how to obtain these competencies.	4.3
3. Develop a policy statement to guide the WONCA leadership in its advocacy work on the use of ICT in primary care.	4.2
4. Collect reviews and commentaries on free IT tools that could be used in low-resource settings.	3.8
5. Maintain a list of links to useful websites, resources, blogs and Twitter feeds on IT in the service of primary care.	3.6
6. Publish very brief screenshot videos as examples of good functionalities of electronic health records, informatics tools and apps that support the work of GPs.	3.6
7. Arrange (sponsored) webinars on the use of information technology for care coordination, quality improvement, team work, and other aspects of effective primary care.	3.3
8. Produce an e-learning course in primary care IT that could be used for collecting CME points.	3.3

An open-ended question on what else the WIWP could do was included at the end of the survey. The principal responses are shown in Table 2. Collaboration with the 'sister' working party of WONCA, the International Classification Committee (WICC), the promotion of the International Classification

of Primary Care (ICPC), promoting standards for eHealth systems in family practice and educating family doctors on how to use them, were the most frequent suggestions.

**Table 2: What are your expectations and suggestions for the activities of the WONCA Informatics Working Party?<sup>1</sup>**

- Collaborate with WICC (WONCA International Classification Committee) (4)
- Promote and develop ICPC (International Classification of Primary Care) (3)
- Standards for GP systems (3)
- Educate GPs on how to use IT (3)
- Share ideas between countries (2)
- Tools for supporting care of multimorbid patients and longitudinal care of chronic conditions (2)
- Practical advice: List of equipment, personnel and facilities to run primary care IT(1)
- Other single comments included: professional standards and not only technical standards for episodes of care, reasons for encounters, dedicated classification systems such as ICPC, tools for prevention, etc.

<sup>1</sup>Open-ended question; total of 21 responses (with number of responses per item shown in brackets)

## Discussion

Bias is both possible and likely because of the convenience sample of people who responded to the survey. People with particular interests might have been more likely to reply, and we are unable to verify whether this was the case or not. Also, the survey was limited in scope in that it enquired quite specifically about what respondents wanted to have available on the WONCA website. It did not ask about other activities that the WIWP could undertake.

Bearing that in mind, it is nevertheless important that respondents generally wanted information on the WONCA website that could help to set standards in primary care eHealth, such as defining the key functionalities for ICT tools and programs, and the required health practitioner competencies, rather than providing the educational resources per se. This should help WIWP to prioritise certain items within its work program.

The open-ended question to some extent reinforced the findings from the eight statements, but also emphasised that WIWP and WICC should collaborate closely. This should influence the activities of these two committees of WONCA.

## Acknowledgements

WIWP members, EQuIP members and Professor Michael Kidd

## References

1. WONCA Global Family Doctor: What is WONCA'S mission statement? <http://www.globalfamilydoctor.com/AboutWonca/brief.aspx> (accessed 11 May 2015)