

Report from 2001

A BUSY YEAR FOR WHO-WONCA COLLABORATION

Since my appointment as the WONCA-WHO Liaison in July 2000 I have spent a lot of time and energy making contacts and explaining the aims and activities of WONCA world wide. Much has been accomplished during the past year. The following is a status report on some of the collaborative projects between the two organizations.

The WHO's goal of HEALTH for ALL is not only a concern of the health professions, but also a major goal of governments, health administrators, academic institutions and communities. All of these stakeholders must work together to develop quality, affordable, integrated health systems that meets people's needs. This vision of the key stakeholders working together towards Health for All was captured in a publication, Towards Unity for Health (TUFH), that was conceptualized and written by Dr. Charles Boelen of the WHO.

WONCA clearly has an important role as one of the stakeholders. It was in this context that I was appointed coordinator of the working group "TUFH and the Health Professions". During the 2001 WONCA World Conference in Durban, South Africa, a WONCA TUFH working group met to discuss challenges and opportunities that family doctors have with health systems to promote the TUFH vision. We developed recommendations and action plans, on how family doctors could implement strategies towards HEALTH for ALL in close co-operation with all the health professions and within regional political and socio-economic conditions. Good inter-professional communication and multi-disciplinary team-work, well integrated in education and everyday practice, will be an asset to achieve the general aim and defend the health profession's self interest, at the same time.

WONCA and WHO are finishing a major two year project to complete and publish Improving Health Systems: The Contribution of Family Medicine. We hope that this "guidebook" will play a key role to inform those stakeholders of the contribution of the family doctor in helping health care systems to meet people's needs. We also hope that the guidebook will assist family doctors around the world how to strengthen their role and contribution in health systems.

Many other major WHO-WONCA collaborative projects are led by our Working Parties. Professor Niels Bentzen and the WONCA International Classification Committee have pioneered the International Classification of Primary Care (ICPC-2) System for classifying health problems encountered in the primary care system. This approach complements the International Classification of Diseases (ICDC-10), a disease oriented classification system periodically updated by the WHO. During the past year, Professor Bentzen has led efforts to link the two classification systems and to eventually gain WHO endorsement of ICPC.

Professor Roger Strasser and the WONCA Rural Practice Working Party have collaborated closely with the WHO on strategies to improve the health of rural and indigenous people around the world. During the past year, WONCA and the WHO have been planning a major WHO-WONCA Invitational Conference on Rural Health to be held April 27-29, 2002 at the Monash University School of Rural Health in Australia.

A glossy brochure describing these and other collaborative projects between WHO and WONCA was completed and distributed during the WONCA World Conference in Durban, South Africa in May 2001. Copies of the WHO-WONCA brochure can be obtained by contacting the WONCA Secretariat in Singapore.

Dr. Ilse Hellemann
WONCA Liaison Person to WHO
Co-ordinator of the TUFH Working Group
"TUFH and Health Professions"