

WONCA EMR Newsletter

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Moving Forward Together in Challenging Times,

The Eastern Mediterranean Region is going through an exceptionally difficult period. Conflict, displacement, migration, economic pressures, environmental changes, and disease outbreaks continue to challenge our communities and health systems. Yet, even during such difficult times, people still need accessible, continuous, and compassionate healthcare. At WONCA EMR, we remain committed to working with our member organizations and family physicians to strengthen Family Medicine and improve Primary Health Care (PHC) across the region. The challenges we face make this mission more important, not less. While looking toward the future, Family Medicine and PHC must continue even during emergencies. We must respond to the immediate crisis without losing sight of those who need ongoing care.



On the other hand, strong PHC is essential not only in times of stability, but particularly during times of crisis. We also recognize that we cannot achieve this alone. Building partnerships with organizations that share our commitment to better health is therefore one of our priorities. By working together, sharing experience, and supporting education and professional development, we can build more resilient and sustainable primary healthcare systems that serve everyone in our region. I am delighted that WONCA EMR is moving toward signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Arab Board of Health Specializations. This collaboration will strengthen postgraduate training and help prepare competent family physicians who can provide comprehensive, high-quality care to their communities. We are also developing a partnership with the International Family Medicine (IFM) Conference in the United Arab Emirates, where we hope to expand educational and scientific activities, conferences, and continuing professional development opportunities, helping family physicians keep their knowledge and skills up to date.

Finally, I would like to thank all family physicians and healthcare professionals across our region, particularly those working under the pressures of conflict, displacement, migration, epidemics, and humanitarian emergencies who continue to serve despite limited resources, disrupted services, and risks to their own safety. Their work is not limited to emergency care, but also to providing continuity of care to those living with diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, cancer, mental health problems, and many other chronic conditions. Mothers still need care, children still need vaccinations, and older people still need support. If these essential services are interrupted, today's manageable illnesses can become serious and sometimes irreversible complications tomorrow.

WONCA EMR will continue to stand beside its members, build meaningful partnerships, strengthen education, and advocate for Family Medicine throughout the region. Our circumstances may be difficult, but by working together, we can move toward sustainable, people-centred PHC that reaches every community and leaves no one behind.

Prof. Faisal Abdullatif Alnaser *FRCGP, MRCGP, MICGP, FFPH, PhD, AFM(USA)*

Professor of Family Medicine
President, WONCA Eastern Mediterranean Region
President of Bahrain Family Physicians Association
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Arab Board of Health Specializations and WONCA EMR Sign MoU to Strengthen Family Medicine

Amman, Jordan – 25 September 2026

The Arab Board of Health Specializations (ABHS) and the World Organization of Family Doctors – Eastern Mediterranean Region (WONCA EMR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Friday evening, 25 September 2026, to strengthen cooperation in the field of Family Medicine. The signing ceremony was held at the Mövenpick Hotel in Amman, Jordan.

The MoU was signed on behalf of the Arab Board of Health Specializations by H.E. Professor Dr. Omar Al-Rawas, Secretary-General of the Arab Board, and on behalf of WONCA EMR by Professor Dr. Faisal Alnaser, President of WONCA EMR.

The signing ceremony was attended by Dr. Jawad Diwan, Assistant Secretary-General of the Arab Board of Health Specializations, members of the Scientific Council of Family Medicine, and senior advisers to the Arab Board.

The MoU aims to expand scientific, academic, and professional cooperation between the two organizations, promote the exchange of expertise, and support education, training, and professional development in Family Medicine. It will also encourage joint scientific programs and initiatives between the two organizations.

The agreement is particularly significant given the central role of Family Medicine in primary health care and the growing need for well-trained family physicians capable of responding to the evolving needs of patients, families, and health systems.

The partnership brings together the expertise of both organizations with one clear ambition: stronger Family Medicine, stronger primary health care, and ultimately, a qualified family physician for every family.





Family Medicine Guide دليل طب الأسرة



Your Guide to Family Medicine

We are pleased to share **Daleel FM**, a practical resource designed to support family physicians, residents, medical students, and healthcare professionals working in primary care.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the *Saudi Society of Family and Community Medicine* for their valuable efforts and contribution to the development and sharing of this important resource.

Daleel FM aims to make access to useful Family Medicine resources easier, more organized, and more convenient, helping clinicians strengthen their knowledge, support continuous professional development, and provide evidence-based, patient-centered care.

Whether you are preparing for clinical practice, teaching, training, or professional development, we hope this guide will serve as a valuable reference throughout your Family Medicine journey.

STRONG PRIMARY CARE BEGINS WITH ACCESSIBLE KNOWLEDGE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

EXPLORE DALEEL FM

HERE



Bridging tradition and modern care:

A narrative review on managing menopause in Saudi primary healthcare settings

- **MALAKA A. AL SHAMMARI**

Menopause is a multifaceted biological, psychological, and social transition experienced by women worldwide. While global research describes variations in symptom prevalence and cultural interpretations, the Saudi context remains underexplored despite its unique cultural, religious, and social influences. Saudi women commonly report vasomotor, psychological, and musculoskeletal symptoms, yet intimate and urogenital concerns remain underreported due to cultural norms. Primary healthcare (PHC) services face documented gaps in training, readiness, and communication, further limiting comprehensive care for menopausal women. This narrative review examines the cultural, religious, psychological, and social dimensions of menopause among Saudi women, evaluates patient-provider interaction dynamics within PHC services, and highlights opportunities for integrating culturally appropriate management approaches.

Findings demonstrate that cultural and Islamic values strongly shape women's perceptions of menopause, coping strategies, and health-seeking behavior. Herbal and traditional remedies remain widely used, often preferred over hormone replacement therapy. Significant barriers affect PHC-level care, including limited provider training, gender dynamics influencing consultation comfort, lack of privacy, and the absence of national menopause management guidelines. Psychologically, many women experience mood changes, anxiety, and altered self-perception, while social factors—particularly family and marital dynamics—play a critical role in adjustment. Emerging community-based programs and telemedicine platforms offer promising culturally sensitive avenues to improve access and quality of care.

Current PHC services have notable gaps but also clear opportunities for improvement through clinical training, culturally competent communication, integration of safe traditional practices, and expansion of telemedicine. Developing national guidelines and community-based education initiatives is essential to enhance patient-centered, culturally congruent menopausal care in Saudi Arabia.



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**FOR FURTHER DETAILS,
READ THE FULL ARTICLE**

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The Lebanese Society of Family Medicine (LSFM) Successfully Concludes Its 2026 Annual Congress

The Lebanese Society of Family Medicine (LSFM) successfully held its Annual Congress from June 11-13, 2026, under the leadership of Dr. Najla Lakkis, President of the Lebanese Society of Family Medicine (LSFM) and Chair of the Congress.

The Congress was held during a particularly challenging period marked by profound difficulties in Lebanon, including the consequences of war, regional instability, population displacement, and ongoing economic constraints affecting individuals and healthcare systems alike. Despite these unprecedented challenges, LSFM remained committed to providing a high-quality scientific and educational event, reaffirming the resilience, dedication, and solidarity of the medical community and the importance of maintaining professional collaboration, continuous learning, and support for family physicians during difficult times.

Participation in the Congress was offered free of charge to all attendees, thanks to the generous educational sponsorship provided by several pharmaceutical companies, whose support covered the registration fees. This initiative aimed to ensure broad access to continuing medical education and allowed healthcare professionals to benefit from a comprehensive scientific program despite the prevailing circumstances.

The Congress adopted a hybrid format, with the first day conducted entirely online and the second and third days offered in both in-person and virtual formats. The face-to-face sessions were hosted at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Hamra, Beirut, providing an important opportunity for family physicians from across Lebanon to meet in person, strengthen professional relationships, exchange experiences, and reinforce the sense of community that is central to family medicine.

While LSFM had traditionally welcomed a large number of family physicians from Arab countries and the wider MENA region, the prevailing security situation and regional challenges prevented many international colleagues from attending this year's Congress in person. Nevertheless, the hybrid format allowed continued engagement and participation from healthcare professionals beyond Lebanon. The opening day focused on the rapidly evolving field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare, featuring sessions that explored the integration of AI into clinical practice, medical education, research, and healthcare delivery. The following two days covered a broad range of topics highly relevant to daily family medicine practice, providing participants with the latest evidence-based guidelines, clinical updates, and practical approaches to patient care across multiple disciplines.

The scientific program featured approximately 60 distinguished speakers, including family physicians and experts from a wide range of medical specialties. About half of the faculty were family physicians, while the remaining speakers represented various medical and surgical specialties, reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of primary care. All invited speakers held academic appointments at recognized medical schools, ensuring a high-quality, evidence-based educational experience.

The Congress attracted approximately 500 healthcare professionals through both in-person and virtual participation. Attendees included Lebanese family physicians and general practitioners practicing both within Lebanon and abroad, as well as family physicians from the MENA region. The event provided an important platform for continuing medical education, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the exchange of knowledge and best practices in primary healthcare.

The Congress was accredited by the Lebanese Order of Physicians, which awarded participants 16.5 Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits, recognizing the scientific quality and educational value of the program.

Commenting on the success of the Congress, Dr. Najla Lakkis, President of the Lebanese Society of Family Medicine and Chair of the Congress, stated:

"Holding this Congress during such challenging times reflects the strength, dedication, and resilience of the family medicine community in Lebanon. Beyond its scientific value, this gathering represented an important opportunity for connection, support, and collaboration among family physicians. LSFM remains committed to advancing primary care, promoting lifelong learning, and maintaining strong professional links with colleagues in Lebanon and across the region."

The LSFM Annual Congress continues to reinforce the Society's commitment to advancing family medicine, promoting lifelong learning, and supporting excellence in primary care throughout Lebanon and the MENA region.



WONCA EMR CONFERENCE 2026 *IMPORTANT UPDATE*

In light of the rapidly evolving regional situation and the heightened uncertainty affecting travel, mobility, and participation across parts of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the WONCA EMR Conference, originally scheduled to take place in Cairo in November 2026, has been postponed to 2028.

This difficult decision was taken with the safety and well-being of our colleagues, participants, their families, and the wider WONCA community as our foremost priority.

We deeply appreciate the commitment of everyone who has registered, submitted abstracts, contributed to the scientific programme, or made arrangements to attend. Please be assured that the scientific and organisational work already undertaken will be preserved as far as possible.

Further information regarding revised dates, existing registrations, abstracts, accommodation, and related arrangements will be shared as soon as details are finalised.

Our thoughts are with colleagues and communities across the region during this period of uncertainty, and we look forward with hope to welcoming the WONCA community to Cairo in 2028



WONCA EMR Cairo Conference

Postponed to 2028



Your safety and well-being come first



The WONCA EMR Conference, originally scheduled to take place in Cairo in November 2026, has been postponed to 2028 in light of continuing regional instability and uncertainty surrounding travel and developments in the months ahead.



The safety and well-being of everyone involved are central to this decision. We extend our sincere apologies to registered colleagues, speakers, partners, and supporters for the inconvenience and disappointment caused, and deeply appreciate the time and effort already dedicated to preparing for the conference.



Further details about existing registrations and revised conference arrangements will be communicated once confirmed.



During this uncertain time, our thoughts remain with all affected communities. **We wish everyone safety and peace, and look forward to welcoming colleagues to Cairo under more stable circumstances.**

WONCA EMR UPCOMING CONFERENCE 2027

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