

Montegut Scholarship Recipient Report -North America WONCA Region

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that I write this report as requested by the ABFM-F office in lieu of me being the recipient of the 2015 Montegut Scholarship for the North American Region. I participated in both the Polaris preconference and AAFP Global Health Conference held in Denver, Colorado this year. Below are the lessons learned, followed by my action points.

Polaris Pre-conference (1st October, 2015)

I was part of the Polaris Pre-conference committee as the Caribbean representative. I helped design the logo for this conference and facilitated a workshop entitled FM (Family Medicine) Changemakers/Collaboration. It was indeed refreshing meeting up with my North American counterparts and seeing the enthusiasm and passion they share for Family Medicine. In preparing for this workshop on FM Changemakers I learned more about the group that had originated in Vasco Da Gama, our European young doctors equivalent. From the FM Changemakers breakout session I had the opportunity to meet several other Family Physicians from the US some of which were involved in academics like me. We enjoyed sharing ideas about what we would like to change in our setting about Family Medicine. A core topic that emerged following our round table discussion was the “Image of Family Medicine” and how we could make the specialty more appealing especially to young medical students. We brainstormed catchy hashtags, creating a video of Family Physicians showcasing who they are and what they do and innovative ways to reach medical students among other ideas. This made me think about ways in which I can elevate the image of FM locally in my region the Caribbean and in my island of Trinidad and Tobago. We have a Young Family Doctors Facebook Group which I help moderate.

As part of the pre-conference executive meeting, which I was part of, I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Calvin Gutkin (past CEO of the Canadian College of FPs) through Professor Ruth Wilson (North American Region WONCA President) who I had met earlier this year when she came to Trinidad to be our FM external examiner. They were both very instrumental in giving me advice about their system of certification of Family Physicians in Canada. Coincidentally we in the Caribbean are at that stage where our Caribbean College of Family Physicians is looking at creating a process for accreditation and certification of doctors. I learned from my initial talks with Dr. Gutkin at this preconference meeting, about the basic steps that were taken in Canada years ago when they were at the same developmental stage we are at. Declaring that FM is a specialty, getting people qualified in education and working closely together with college members were some basic steps in setting up certification. Through Dr. Gutkin I made contact with Dr. Rainsberry who is presently the Associate Executive Director of Academic Family Medicine in the Canadian College. He has shared a wealth of information and suggested others who will be very helpful in providing advice for our certification process.

Global Health Workshop (2-4th October 2015)

This three day workshop offered numerous lecture series, facilitated discussions, reflections and case designs in various Global Health topics. The ones that stood out for me were the clinical topics surrounding Dengue, Chikungunya and evaluation of travelers. As a practicing physician these lectures reinforced the approach I have used in seeing patients back at home in the Caribbean which has travelers from most continents. It emphasized the management and diagnosis of viral illnesses as well as expanded my differential for the traveler with fever. The “Get ready, Get set, go” lecture was excellent in that it went into details of what should be in place for travel. Things that you take for granted were highlighted and I can see myself using this information personally as well as sharing it with my patients. Learning about medical tourism was interesting because I never knew that it was such a big industry globally. I

have had patients leave my island and go to foreign countries for kidney transplant because it was cheaper. Now I know about certain risks and I feel better able to advise such patients who may be easily lured by the cheaper medical procedures offered abroad.

I also learned of the challenges in setting up FM training especially in resource limited settings. We face similar issues locally in running our programmes and are in the midst of improving the quality of the programmes that we offer. This has given me encouragement that we may also someday be able to make changes to strengthen our FM training both in my island and regionally. Climate change and how FPs fit in was also something I learned about. Simple measures like asking patients about readiness for emergencies and disaster preparedness were not steps that I ever thought about doing as a family physician.

I was delighted to learn that there was a Primary Care Assessment Tool. I never knew such a tool existed. I would be interested in seeing how this tool performs in my setting, what would be the results and how those results could be used to convince our stakeholders of the relevance and importance of primary care.

My action points emerging out of my participation in this conference would be:

- 1) To continue my collaboration with Polaris as the Caribbean representative focusing on ways of how to improve the image of family medicine in my setting. I plan to share information about FM and our young doctor's group, with all my undergraduate medical students as well as my postgraduate students involved in general practice.
- 2) To liaise online with the people I met at the FM Changemakers session to maintain links and keep our ideas going about how we can improve the image of family medicine
- 3) To contact key persons at the Canadian College concerning their alternate route to certification to get further details on how their process works. I will serve as a liaison with my local college accreditation committee, giving input on how we can set up certification appropriate for our setting
- 4) To propose to colleagues and other local academics the idea of using the Primary Care Assessment Tool in the Trinidadian setting, with the hope of such results being shared with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders.

I wish to again thank you for affording me the opportunity of attending this conference. It was an amazing experience meeting so many other Family Physicians and I know I have forged links that would last a lifetime. The information I gained from this conference would not only benefit me but also my patients, my students in training and the overall development of Family Medicine my region.

Sincerely,

Dr. M. Shastri Motilal
Trinidad
(North America WONCA Region)