

Championing family medicine – regional Wonca's growth toward maturity

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The past 6 years have seen many family medicine developments in the Asia Pacific region. On top of these is the birth of the *Asia Pacific Family Medicine* journal.¹ Conceptualized in 1997, this journal is meant to bring continuing medical education to the physicians' doorsteps. It shall keep practitioners in the region up to date with relevant published articles in family medicine. It shall endeavor to focus on medical problems and issues from the perspective of fulfilling the needs of the family physicians in the region.²

Another significant development is having an administrative structure in place. Wonca Asia Pacific now has its own bylaws and regional executives are already in charge.¹ Several committees and networks on Education, Research, Informatics, Classification, Editors and Quality, have been formed.¹ This alone makes us extremely confident for the future of Wonca in the Asia Pacific region.

So far, seven Family Medicine Education Workshops have been conducted since 1993. The first workshop on Core Curriculum for Family Medicine residency program was held in Manila (1993) and the proceedings were distributed to Wonca Council members in 1995.³ This was followed by Clinical Teaching in Macau (1995), Research Methodologies for Family Medicine in Kuala Lumpur (1996), Assessment of Clinical Performance and Competence in Seoul (1997), Teaching and Learning in Family Medicine in Bangkok (1998), Quality Improvement in Family Medicine in Taipei (1999) and Continuing Professional Development in Christchurch (2000).^{1,2,4–6} All these workshops provided a forum for exchange of information and experience; and led to the organization of two networks – Research and Quality.

The Research Contests conducted in Seoul, Taipei and Christchurch were immensely successful. They were well received and continue to attract more entries year after year.

Informatics made an impact on several occasions with the integration of computer sessions in all regional conferences. It has an active list group and a web site in Chinese, based in Taipei. This is very important considering that Chinese is spoken not only in China but also in Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. The web site for Asia Pacific is the planning stage with links to Wonca World site. Abstracts of journals, educational programs, departments, resources and other data will soon be available.^{1,6}

It is also noteworthy to mention that the first Wonca Collaboration Center for Classification is based in the Family Medicine Research Unit of the University of Sydney at Westmead. The Center through the Classification Committee has been very active in the promotion of the International Classification of Primary Care Version 2 formulated by Wonca.^{1,5}

Quality, although the last network to be organized, easily gained momentum. The first workshop integrated with a Regional Conference was conducted in Christchurch.¹ It shall be the centerpiece of the 2002 Conference in Kuala Lumpur.

The region has been actively involved in conferences and meetings. There were Regional Conferences in Seoul (1997), Taipei (1999) and Christchurch (2000).¹ These conferences not only brought the member organizations closer, but also enabled family physicians and general practitioners to acquaint themselves with medical problems and issues that are unique to their own country of origin. We can now expect an even better outcome in future conferences where more (Kuala Lumpur 2002, Beijing for 2003, Kyoto for 2005 and Bangkok for 2006) family medicine education workshops shall be in order.¹

Twinning is alive in the region. Here, we witness countries with developed family medicine working with countries which need to develop family medicine, either from an organizational perspective or

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from an educational perspective. Singapore College of Family Physician has worked with Indonesia in its Training of Trainors Program. It has also joined Myanmar as it develops programs and concepts in family medicine and China in the translation of some World Organization of Family Doctors documents. The Royal Australia College of General Practitioners continues to give a conjoint examination with Hong Kong and Malaysia. In addition, it has lent support to the Fiji College of General Practitioners and The Chinese Society of General Practitioners. The Philippine Academy of Family Physicians worked closely with Vietnam and Mongolia in its family medicine development activities. The Hong Kong College of Family Physicians works closely with the Macau

College of General Practitioners and China in family medicine development.^{1,2}

The Asia Pacific region has a lot to do in the coming years. The priority goal of the World Organization of Family Doctors is evolving family medicine in areas where there is none. In addition to Vietnam and Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea and the island countries in the Pacific may need assistance in developing family medicine. Many materials have to be rewritten to be more friendly and flexible and to make easy adaptation possible. We, however, can take consolation in the fact that even in the most developed economies, needs are apparent for family physicians to take further steps to win recognition and be on a par with other specialists.^{1,2}

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