



Network organisation within WONCA Region Europe – ESGP/FM

“General Practice/ Family Medicine can deliver real solutions in stressed healthcare systems, throughout Europe”

Public statement of EURACT Council Meeting, University of The Algarve November 10-12, 2011

Crisis and great difficulty was reported in the health care systems of many EU countries at a recent Council Meeting of the European Academy of Teachers in General Practice and Family Medicine (EURACT).

The Council Meeting was held at the University of the Algarve in Portugal, and attended by representatives from over 30 European Countries.

At a time when financial uncertainty and cutting costs are to the fore in many countries, the value of General Practice/Family Medicine as a key part of acceptable, cost effective and proven healthcare delivery was restated at the EURACT Council Meeting.

“Health care systems which contain well trained and well supported general practitioners/family doctors consistently deliver best value for money, and better outcomes for individuals, families and communities,” has been stated at the meeting. Systems which rely on either specialist delivered care, or models which provide fragmented care are neither as effective nor as efficient as systems which maintain well organised Family Practice as the point of first contact for patients accessing healthcare for themselves, and for their families.

“We appreciate that many EU Countries and their citizens are working under very difficult financial pressures,” has been noted, *“but we urge individual citizens and political leaders to place a value on General Practice and on Family Medicine.”*

The evidence and international consensus is that continued modest investment in Primary Care delivers major benefits in terms of both population health and the wellbeing of individual patients. Best value is obtained from Euros invested in General Practice/Family Medicine than in any other element of the healthcare system.

Countries and healthcare systems faced with difficult decisions regarding obtaining best value for reduced health care budgets can look to General Practice/Family Medicine with confidence, in terms of delivering real value and good care, at the least cost.

Further adequate investments in General Practice/Family Medicine are also necessary to enable it to develop its full potential and to prevent an increasing use of hospital based care and an increasing division of care on different providers, which would cut family doctor-patient continuity and relationship and in this way would lead to higher cost.

“Many of us engaged in General Practice/Family Medicine Teaching might be tempted to feel discouraged by the uncertainty and stresses faced by our Patients,” has also been stressed, “but this is arguably a time when the discipline of General Practice, driven by science and compassion rather than money and profit, can really shine.”

Moreover, the EURACT Council is worried explicitly about the way EU regulations concerning the Undergraduate and Post-graduate specialty training of Family Physicians is neglected or disrespected in some European countries, concerning selection of teachers, students and trainees, as well as General Practice/Family Medicine curricula. We therefore ask for the attention of all members of the European Parliament and other national governments EU structures and other stakeholders for this matter.

On behalf of EURACT
Professor Janko Kersnik, EURACT president

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Janko Kersnik', is positioned below the typed name.