

# WONCA, International Sharing and Research in General/Family Practice

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This issue marks the start of another new direction for *The Journal of Family Practice*—the publication of the semi-annual Research Newsletter of the Standing Committee on Research of the World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians (WONCA). The current Research Newsletter summarizes the various developments related to research which took place at the Eighth World Conference of WONCA held in Montreux, Switzerland in May of this year, and includes an overview of research activity in General/Family Practice in a number of countries around the world.

As previously reported, WONCA was formally established in 1972 with four major objectives:<sup>1</sup>

1. To promote and maintain high standards of general/family medical practice through education and research;
2. To foster communication and understanding among general practitioners/family physicians the world over;
3. To represent the academic and research activities of the general practitioner/family physician before other world organizations or forums concerned with health or medical care; and
4. To stimulate the development of educational and research organizations of general practitioners/family physicians.

There are now 24 nations represented in WONCA, with ongoing international efforts organized under nine Standing Committees. Some of these committees have already been extremely productive, particularly that responsible for the development of the now widely accepted International Classification of Health Problems in Primary Care (ICHPPC).

The presently conceived roles of the Standing Committee on Research are threefold:

1. To organize scientific sessions of the WONCA Conferences;
2. To encourage international research directly or indirectly through the Newsletter; and
3. To plan and develop a Research Intelligence Unit to collate and support information exchanged with all of the member countries.

The Research Newsletter is edited by Dr. Peter Curtis of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of North Carolina.

Although the patterns of medical practice and medical education in General/Family Practice may vary considerably around the world, the commonalities involved in research in this field greatly exceed the differences between countries. ICHPPC, for example, provides an international language for the coding of clinical problems encountered in primary care. It can be anticipated that much of the developing methodology for research in primary care will find general application throughout the world, and that the results of research in General/Family Practice in any one country will be of increasing interest elsewhere in the world.

The development of a strong research base in General/Family Practice is an international need, whether for clinical, health care services, or educational research. We have much to learn from our colleagues around the world as growing emphasis is placed upon research in the discipline. *The Journal of Family Practice* welcomes the opportunity to contribute to these efforts through the publication of the Research Newsletter, which will also be made available to the membership of WONCA and to other journals in the field elsewhere in the world.

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