

11th Conference of the European Society of General Practice/Family Medicine

Dr Mario R SAMMUT and Dr Jean Karl SOLER

A new chapter was written in the history of Maltese Family Medicine at the 11th Conference of the European Society of General Practice / Family Medicine (World Organisation of Family Doctors: WONCA - Europe). Here, for the first time, two Specialists in Family Medicine from Malta were invited to give plenary presentations at an international conference of General Practice / Family Medicine. The Malta College of Family Doctors was represented by Dr Mario R Sammut and Dr Jean Karl Soler at this conference which took place in Greece on 3-7 September 2005 on Kos, the Island of Hippocrates (Figure 1).

Drs Sammut and Soler were accompanied by their respective wives Dr Carmen Sammut and Mrs Joyce Soler, and Dr Soler's children Stephen and Vicky (Figure 2). Dr Mario R Sammut's expenses were paid by the Conference Organisers, and those of Dr Carmen Sammut and the Solers were borne by the participants themselves.



Figure 1: A mosaic in the Kos Museum depicting Hippocrates, the father of medicine (left) awaiting the arrival of Asklepieion, the Greek God of Medicine (centre) at the Port of Kos.

Themes

While the overall theme of the conference was "From Hippocrates to the human genome: the past, present and future of General Practice / Family Medicine", the main themes were:

- Cultural determinants of illness and the role of General Practice / Family Medicine;
- Needs assessment in General Practice / Family Medicine;
- Measuring effectiveness in General Practice / Family Medicine.



Figure 2: Left to right: Dr Jean Karl Soler, Stephen Soler, Mrs Joyce Soler, Vicky Soler and Dr Carmen Sammut at the Conference Gala Dinner.

Thus each day of the Conference was dedicated to one of the above themes, with WONCA-Europe's three main networks (EURACT – European Academy of Teachers in General Practice, EGPRN – European General Practice Research Network and EQuIP – European Working Party on Quality in Family Practice) given a more active participation in the Conference through their representatives jointly facilitating a thematic interactive workshop every morning.

WONCA-Europe Council Meeting

The Malta College of Family Doctors was represented by Dr Jean Karl Soler at the Council Meeting of WONCA-Europe that took place on the 3rd September 2005. The agenda, besides the usual order of business (approval of minutes, officials reports and reports from the network organisations), included the approval of a new strategic paper on WONCA Europe conferences and the choice of the venue for the WONCA Europe meeting of 2008. EURACT presented the 'EURACT Educational Agenda of General Practice/Family Medicine' that included the contributions of Dr Mario R Sammut as Maltese EURACT Council member. Another important item was

the choice of a new publisher for the European Journal of General Practice, and Dr Soler was invited to join a committee examining the options for short and long term solutions to this problem.

Opening Ceremony

After welcomes from the various local and WONCA dignitaries, Prof. Theodoros Mountokalakis from the University of Athens gave the opening keynote speech regarding the conference theme 'From Hippocrates to the human genome: the past, present and future of general practice / family medicine'. This was followed by the presentation of WONCA-World awards to Prof. R Grol and Prof. G Visentin for their services to international family practice.

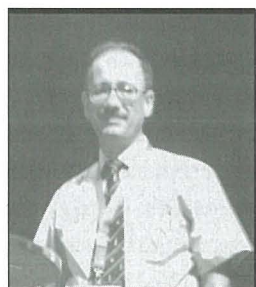


Figure 3: Dr Mario R Sammut on the podium in the Hippocrates Ballroom at the Kos International Conference Centre where the plenary workshop on 'Needs Assessment in General Practice / Family Medicine' took place

Maltese participants' plenary sessions

The Malta College of Family Doctors was honoured when Dr Mario R Sammut was selected by EGPRN as its representative in the plenary workshop on 'Needs Assessment in General Practice / Family Medicine' chaired by Professor Paul Wallace, former Chairman of EGPRN, on the 5th September 2005. Dr Sammut spoke about 'The use of appropriate methods & sources of data to determine health needs' (Figure 3).

Then, on the 6th September 2005, Dr Jean Karl Soler, in his capacity as member of WICC (WONCA International Classification Committee), spoke about 'Recent advances in the classification field for primary care. ICPC into WHO-FIC. Towards ICPC3' in a plenary session. This session was entitled 'The International Classification of Primary Care (ICPC); recent advances, research applications and teaching' and was chaired by Dr Marc Jamouille.

Other presentations and chairs

Dr Mario R Sammut also presented a personal paper entitled 'Job Satisfaction among State GPs in Malta: Addressing Manpower Needs', and was co-author of a joint paper presented by EUROPREV (European Network on Prevention and Promotion in General Practice / Family Medicine) on 'Guide



Figure 4: The re-enactment of the taking of the Hippocratic Oath among the ruins in Kos of the Temple of Asklepieion, the Greek God of Medicine.

on Healthy Diet: Views of General Practitioners and Nurses'. Being a member of the EUROPREV Coordinating Group, he was also involved in the preparation for a EUROPREV Workshop entitled 'Promoting a healthy diet through counselling in primary care' which, unfortunately, he could not attend as this clashed with the presentation of his personal paper.

Dr Sammut moreover accepted the invitation of the Conference Host Organising Committee to chair a session on the Care of the Elderly in General Practice. His co-chair was Dr Georgios Spatharakis from Greece who, like Dr Sammut, is his country's national representative to EURACT and a member of the EURACT Council.

Dr Jean Karl Soler was an invited speaker at two workshops. He presented an outline of the study of burnout in European GPs, a study that he has coordinated with Ass. Prof. Hakan Yaman from Turkey. The study has collected data on burnout levels in 1,500 European GPs from 13 countries, and is being prepared for imminent publication. Dr Soler was also invited to talk about Malta in a workshop about cultural determinants of illness organised by the rural GP network of WONCA, EURIPA.

Closing session

The closing keynote lecture on the 7th September 2005 was entitled 'Quality in Primary Health Care: the personal, organisational and political dimensions' and given by Prof. Roger Jones from the King's College, London, UK. After presentations from the organisers of the next WONCA-Europe Conferences (in Florence, Italy – 2006 and Paris, France – 2007), Dr B-P R Merkouris, President of the Host Organising Committee made the closing comments and thanked all those involved in the conference organisation. The ceremony was then concluded at the site of the temple dedicated to Asklepieion, the Greek God of Medicine. There the conference participants reaffirmed their Hippocratic Oath during a ceremony where the taking of the oath was re-enacted in the original Ancient Greek language (Figure 4).