

Juan Mendive¹

Palma de Mallorca 1999: a different and successful experience



The Council of Wonca Europe tasked the Spanish Society of Family and Community Medicine (semFYC) with organising the 1999 European Conference, but with a very different format. Actually it was going to be, not a Wonca Europe Conference in the customary form, but a Conference focused on Wonca Europe network activities.

Hence the title of this conference: First European Network Organisations Open Conference-Wonca '99. A long title for a challenging and difficult assembly!

The idea was excellent. It was a critical moment in Wonca Europe, and the networks needed more scope to develop a common scientific programme at the principal annual venue. The main objective was to expand cooperation among the networks and give them an opportunity to participate in activities on a joint basis.

Thus EURACT, EQuIP, EGPRW (now EGPRN), EUROPREV and EURIPA built a programme in common, with the additional participation of other working groups.

It was certainly an exciting challenge to try and establish, for the first time, workshops between, for instance, EURACT and EGPRW working towards a common agenda on research into training for primary care!! The same applied to quality, prevention and rural agendas.

It is now almost 10 years since that historic conference took place, but I am sure that Mallorca '99 was a key moment for the successful development of Wonca Europe activities in succeeding years. Having observed the recent development of Wonca Europe and network activities, I am proud to have been able to contribute in a way to the success of the Wonca '99 conference.

I still have a large store of memories from the conference – memories of the preceding months which were fraught with challenges to build something that was going to be important and new. Memories of good friends from all round Spain and Europe who from the very beginning trusted in the concept and the idea. Difficult moments also, most of them unknown to the scientific community since it not always easy to draw together the ideas of all the networks in a single joint venue. 10 years after the conference I can reveal what was a secret for many people and divulge that, I think for the first and perhaps only time, the organising committee was forced to close registration and keep the numbers of participants at a level that would guarantee a format closer to workshop scale than a giant European Conference. But in spite of all the pros and cons I think we managed it. Personally, my most cherished memory is having my firstborn child (4 months old) sitting in the first row at the opening ceremony. For many colleagues and friends my baby was a Wonca baby.

During these 10 years I have talked to a lot of European colleagues about Mallorca '99 and there is almost unanimous agreement: Mallorca '99 was great!!

Mallorca '99 was different and successful! Despite the heavy rain at the Bellver Castle welcoming reception after the opening! Hopefully that would be the only dark cloud over the proceedings ...

Correspondence:

Dr. Juan Mendive
La Mina Health Centre
ES-08930 Sant Adrià de Besos (Barcelona)
Spain
jmendivea@meditex.es

¹ Chairman Organising Committee, First European Networks Organisations Open Conference – Wonca '99, Mallorca

