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## The power of Wonca on Family Medicine in Bern



Dear colleagues and friends

When I joined EURACT in the year 2000, it was my first contact with Wonca at all. These were my first steps on completely new land. Up until this moment only about a dozen GP's within the whole country knew what Wonca was and got in touch with one of its organisations. So in the Wonca-sense, we lived on an isolated island and this occurred together with a

huge lack of academic General Practice at everyone of our medical faculties. So when I went to the EURACT-meetings, I went of course to represent my country, although there was not really a lot to represent, and so my main purpose was to learn. For me it was one of the most fascinating experiences I have had the chance to live in my whole professional life. These international meetings with uncomplicated exchange of knowledge, experiences in how others deal with similar problems, significantly changed my views of our profession. I never thought that this could be possible within such a friendly atmosphere among colleagues, as, at this time in Switzerland, we still lived in an overflow of GP's with a lot of concurrence. Since then things began to change substantially.

The department of General Practice in Bern always kept good relations with EURACT and with Wonca. To develop the academic part of our profession we started with developing a revolutionary new model of GP-Teaching in Basic Medical Education, which could be definitively introduced in 2007. Our experiences with Wonca helped us a lot. Our Bernese curriculum<sup>1</sup> is made of a 1:1 teaching situation (1 GP and 1 student), from year 1 to 4 (8 half days per year from year 1–3 and a 3-week block in year 4), and every year has its own learning objectives, evaluation, and exams in year 1 and 3. This

new model became so successful with students and teachers that we finally became an "institute" for Family Medicine in April 2009. Obviously this is only one development among many other activities which we are actually engaged within the faculty, which shows that the speed of the development has really increased.

However, in regard to many other European countries, there are still a lot of things to do. We need to have a special focus on research. The fact that we have started almost from zero and the fact that national institutions are not used to spending money for research projects in GP settings, make things particularly difficult. One of the opportunities of this congress is to give you an overview of what is going on within our country and also to show to our faculties what's going on in our European neighbourhood. Also in this field there can be great profit from Wonca, as faculties have learned to be aware of what is going on internationally. Deans and heads of our university had to admit that they had underestimated the significance of GP-research in other countries and that there is a great need for support. Therefore we constituted an "advisory board" with different members of the faculty throughout all specialities, to develop research projects.

I am sure you can imagine, knowing about the difficulties among competitive research, that this process is not problem-free.

So I hope I have shown you what an influence Wonca has already had on the development of academic General Practice within Switzerland, especially in Bern, and what it is still capable to do for us.

Before everything, I wish that you can spend some wonderful, fascinating and interesting days in my country and I am really looking forward to meeting you all in Basel in September 2009.

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1 Rothenbühler A, Schaufelberger M, Frey P. WS-056 at the Wonca Europe conference 2009 in Basel: A new model in basic medical education in primary care.