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# What is Wonca's input for the quality of Family Medicine throughout Europe?



Wonca's work is closely linked with the development and promotion of quality in health care, more specifically in General Practice/Family Medicine (GP/FM).

To analyse this, we must investigate the history of GP/FM. McWhinney described the different periods of evolution of GP during the first part of the 20th century, from the construction, through a period of connection with scientific bases, until

fragmentation, and decline. Technological developments led to the fragmentation and specialisation of medicine. During the period of growth of specialisation, at the beginning of the 60's, the medical profession, in general, failed to meet the needs of the population. In the meantime, quality improvement (QI) methods were developed in other fields, especially in industry (Donabedian, Deming). Medical practitioners in close contact with the population felt that there was a need for real patient-centred care and for a new kind of generalist. In short, this phenomenon led to the formation of the National medical colleges, who gathered in what became Wonca in 1972.

Wonca's contribution to quality of care is primarily linked to its main objective to "improve the quality of life of the peoples of the world through fostering and maintaining high standards of care in GP/FM".

- First of all, by promoting GP, integrated into the vision of Primary Care (PC)-centred healthcare systems. A PC-centred system has been shown to be more efficient, effective, and able to meet the needs of the population.

## Defining General Practice

The starting point was the statement from the Leeuwenhorst group in 1975 followed by the definition of GP in 2002, later revised in 2005. These definitions, descriptions of tasks and core competencies have been useful to orient practice, contract with stakeholders and to design a teaching curriculum and research agenda.

## Teaching General Practice

The Leeuwenhorst group evolved into an academy of teachers, EURACT, whose aim is to "foster and maintain high standards of care in European GP by promoting GP as a discipline by learning and teaching", designing a unified curriculum for doctors enabling GPs to practice throughout Europe.

## Research in GP

Another part of the Leeuwenhorst group, interested in research, initiated the first research network, EGPRN. This network designed a research agenda based on the analysis of lacking evidence for a strongly evidence-based GP.

## Publishing

Publishing is needed to disseminate research findings and promote GP as an academic discipline. In 2003, a Wonca invitational conference in Canada discussed ways to build a global scientific capacity and research infrastructure, including publishing. Wonca Europe developed a publishing support for the *European Journal for General Practice*, indexed with an active publishing policy.

## Classification

The Wonca International Classification Committee worked to develop and promote International Classification in Primary Care (ICPC) as a common system for European GP. This enables the comparison of the contents of encounters in GP and to analyse variations in practice. It is an essential tool for research and health care policy.

- Secondly, a specific network dedicated to Quality Improvement, EQUIP, was founded in 1991 by Richard Grol under Wonca's umbrella. Its aim is "to ensure that everyone living in Europe has GP/FM care at the best possible quality". This network brought together, on a biannual meeting, representatives from almost all European countries overcoming cultural differences. Delegates are responsible for communication between EQUIP and relevant groups within their country. It has a strong influence in Europe, inspiring and supporting individual GPs, teams, organisations, and health authorities in their effort to continuously improve the quality of health care that they provide. It has achieved this by developing visions for QI, exchanging expertise and ideas, spreading interest in QI among GPs, organisations and policy makers, developing tools and methods and providing leadership on QI in PC.

In conclusion, Grol expressed that quality is not about filling gaps but about building bridges. That is what Wonca does by fostering cooperation among people throughout Europe, from various backgrounds (practitioners, academics, researchers, stakeholders), various geographical origins (North/South, East/West), various disciplines, and also other organisations dealing with quality in GP (UEMO, WHO).

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