

Klaus Bally, Institute of Primary Care, University of Basel, Switzerland

## Wonca and the Institute of Primary Care at the University of Basel (IHAMB) – a successful liaison



I had never even heard of Wonca until 1998, when a colleague persuaded me to attend a Wonca Conference – the 1998 Wonca World Conference in Dublin.

### Memories of a Wonca World Conference

When I look back to those days in Ireland I remember:

- never-ending rain, luscious green landscapes and pleasant pubs in which, at 11 pm, the beer taps went from full flow to an abrupt standstill. All my continental European stereotypes of Ireland came true;
- hospitable Irish colleagues who invited us, after our presentations, to the Wicklow Mountains, where we sat in a mountain brook in nothing but our swimming trunks and were treated to champagne;
- an editor of an important English medical journal, whose keynote lecture focussed not on science, research or impact factors but on the partnership between physician and patient;
- a London Professor, head of a University department and general practitioner in a group practice, who supports Primary Care research in England as well as developing and maintaining research networks;
- a German colleague, also a professor of Primary Care, who spoke to an audience of 3000 about his own serious illness, and about times of uncertainty and existential threat; all narrated alternately from a patient's and a physician's perspective;
- a young Lithuanian colleague, a general practitioner from Teheran and four committed Nigerian colleagues who told us, during coffee breaks, about the problems of medical care in their countries;
- a workshop on problem-oriented learning in Primary Care and the OSCE examination technique (objective clinical examination).

### Wonca – a network of general practitioners and friends

When I returned from Dublin, I was excited and told my colleagues about these precious experiences. Problem-oriented learning, as well as the OSCE examination technique, were soon introduced to the Basel curriculum. Enriched by the Wonca experience, general practitioners from Basel took the initiative of implementing these modern learning and examination techniques.

The aforementioned London professor, whom we met in Dublin, became a friend and supporter of the nascent Basel department

and gave us important inputs during his visits to Basel. The German professor, who talked in Dublin about his disease, also became a supporter and friend of the Basel University Institute of Primary Care (IHAMB), which was founded in 2005.

### Wonca – motivation for research, teaching and collaboration

Following the conference in Dublin, there was only one year in which the small IHAMB team did not attend the Wonca Europe Conference.

The Wonca Europe Conference encouraged us to:

- analyze the results of the past year's research and present it together at the conference;
- further develop the one-on-one tutorials, the successful and Europe-wide recognized pre-graduate educational model developed at our department and to present it at the conference, benefiting from an exchange of ideas with teaching colleagues from all over Europe;
- retreat once a year after each conference with the entire IHAMB team in order to reflect on our common task as well as to plan teaching and research activities in the coming year;
- meet friends from the Wonca family in order to exchange experiences and generate ideas.

### Wonca 2009 in Basel – the highlight

The fact that the committee chose the city of Basel as Wonca Europe 2009's host city fills us with joy and satisfaction. We consider this to be the pinnacle of Wonca and IHAMB's collaboration, which started 11 years ago in Dublin. We are personally indebted to Wonca, and so are the IHAMB and the Basel University Medical School. We have gained knowledge, experience, and especially friendship. It would be a pleasure for us, at the IHAMB, to return these favours during the Wonca Conference and to pass on some of our experience, our knowledge and our friendship.

Klaus Bally represents IHAMB and its other members, Hansruedi Banderet, Ursina Halter, Simon Heiniger, Ruedi Isler, Yvonne Mueller, Benedict Martina, Silvana Romerio, Peter Tschudi.

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