

Report on the WONCA Europe Conference; July 2-5 2014; Lisbon, Portugal

by Dr Patrick O' Donnell (PHE)

The theme of this year's World Organization of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners (WONCA) Europe conference was 'New Routes for General Practice and Family Medicine'. The conference began with the launch of the Lisbon declaration on the state of general practice in Europe and its future in the face of financial turmoil on the continent. It stated that 'Health systems based on accessible and comprehensive primary care services, delivered by trained and qualified family doctors, are more effective, can guarantee equity as a part of their social responsibility, have a lower cost and an increased user satisfaction, when compared to health systems with weak primary care services.'

I am a member of the WONCA Special Interest Group on Migrant Care. We presented an international workshop on 'Primary care for migrants in times of crisis.' GPs from Greece, Turkey, Canada and other countries presented on the challenges faced by those on the front lines of primary care for migrants across Europe. Recent political events across the Middle-East and Africa have led to huge numbers of people desperately trying to reach safety in European countries. The presenters offered descriptions of the services they have established in an effort to provide basic healthcare for these vulnerable migrants. My part of the presentation was around how we established a targeted, low-threshold GP clinic for marginalised patients in Limerick city, and the lessons learned in doing that.

Overall, there was a major focus on the effects of austerity on primary care and general practice provision and planning during the conference. The research studies are starting to document the effects of cuts to services and budgets on the health of the populations, particularly those more disadvantaged in society. One eagerly awaited study that was discussed during the conference is the QUALICOPC (Quality and Costs of Primary Care in Europe) study which will analyse results from 31 European countries on the quality, equity and costs of their primary care systems.

WONCA Lisbon declaration

www.woncaeuropa2014.org/en/content/news/lisbon-decalration.html The QUALICOPC study protocol www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2296/12/115