



## Greek-Turkish collaboration in General Practice/ Family Medicine: An example of country-to- country collaboration

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## Context

In September 2000 delegates from Italy, Israel, Greece, Malta, Portugal, Spain and Turkey met to promote the development of a general practice/family medicine (GP/FM) group within the Mediterranean region, and discussed opportunities for further collaboration in the field of education and research.<sup>1</sup>

This idea was supported by a number of historical, cultural and epidemiological factors. In the framework of this group, and the discussions made in a number of WONCA European conferences and EGPRN meetings, it became obvious that the organization of the first Greek – Turkish meeting was (seen as) an important priority for both national associations of GP/FM.

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Sharing common experiences and settings, this meeting was regarded as a real need in identifying a field of potential cooperation, namely in the fields of education and training, research and clinical practice. A common organizing committee prepared a meeting in Salonica, Northern Greece, between 28th and 29th February 2004. This meeting served the main purpose of bringing together academics and associations in order to share experiences, define common problems and discuss important issues within the GP/FM setting.

This paper reports the key messages from the Greek–Turkish meeting and highlights the prospects of such a collaborative effort within the European setting as it was clearly defined by (the) WONCA Europe.

## Summary points

Several proposals for strengthening the future cooperation between the two national societies have been formulated and discussed in the working groups and in plenary sessions. This paper briefly describes some of the actions, which are most likely to be implemented in the near future.

## Educational area

Staff and medical students' exchange visits as well as the collaboration between the Departments of Family Medicine of Turkish Medical Schools and the University of Crete will be promoted.

1. The development of an intensive course within the ERASMUS/SOCRATES European Project, which will focus on communication skills of FPs within multinational societies, has been considered as one of the key priorities of this bilateral collaboration, strengthening the cooperation of both countries in the field of education.
2. The organization of workshops on clinical skills and research methods in general practice, including qualitative methods, has been considered as an urgent priority.

3. Key subjects regarding disease management in a rural setting and health promotion /disease prevention, which require immediate attention, have also been outlined in the plenary.

### *Research area*

1. A small group of researchers from both Associations have agreed to review the open call for funding within the FP6 European Programme, and explore possibilities for organizing common conference(s).
2. Both Associations have also agreed to submit a research proposal to WONCA Europe (Specific Research Project) with the scope of investigating health care utilization in general practice, emphasising the cultural aspect(s) of enabling and disabling factors.
3. A bilateral agreement on evaluating the research capacity in general practice/family medicine of both countries has also been approved.
4. Both national Journals should contribute to the further cooperation of the two associations, sharing ideas and experiences as well as promoting some key publications.

All the actions decided should be monitored by a small common committee (consisting of up to 6 persons) that will be obliged to report to both Associations.

### **Benefits**

Both associations could mutually profit from each other's rich experiences. Many issues need to be discussed further but it is certain that general practice/family medicine is contributing to the body of professional knowledge exchanged between Greece and Turkey. ■

### **Acknowledgements**

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### **References**

- 1 Soler JK, Lionis C, Kaloeidas M, et al. Developing a Mediterranean family medicine group – The Malta consensus. *Eur Gen J Pract* 2002; 8:69-70,74.