

The First Ten Years of EUROPREV – The European Network for Prevention and Health Promotion in Family Medicine and General Practice

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Introduction

EUROPREV – the European Network for Prevention and Health Promotion in Family Medicine and General Practice – was **launched** after the First International Meeting on Prevention and Health Promotion in Europe which took place in Santiago de Compostela, Spain in November 1995.

In April 1996, a meeting was organised in Barcelona between representatives of the World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and others to discuss the creation of a working group on prevention and health promotion, and it was proposed that this be **named** the “European Review Group on Prevention and Health Promotion in Family Medicine and General Practice (EUROPREV)”.

The establishment of EUROPREV was then **approved** by delegates from different European countries representing national colleges of GPs during the WONCA-Europe Conference held in Stockholm, Sweden in July 1996. It was also agreed that the central office of EUROPREV would be **hosted** by SemFYC (Spanish Society of Family and Community Medicine) at its premises in Barcelona, Spain.

Aim & Objectives

During a EUROPREV Council meeting held in the presence of WONCA-Europe President Prof. Chris van Weel in Barcelona in November 1999, the **by-laws** of EUROPREV were approved, with the **aim** of promoting evidence-based prevention in general practice and the following **objectives**:

- To review the scientific evidence available in Europe and the rest of the world related to prevention and health promotion;
- To elaborate recommendations based on scientific evidence and disseminate them to all general practice and family medicine associations in Europe;
- To implement and adapt evidence-based recommendations into clinical practice;

- To define the role of the primary care doctor in prevention and health promotion;
- To promote and encourage multi-centre research and educational programmes in prevention and health promotion throughout Europe.

In November 2001, WONCA-Europe President Dr Philip Evans announced that WONCA-Europe considers EUROPREV as one of its five **network** organisations, and requested that it represent its interests with reference to prevention and health promotion. As a result, EUROPREV changed its official name from ‘review group’ to ‘network’.

Membership

The **Council** of EUROPREV is made up of national representatives from European GP Colleges which are **institutional members** of the network. Two meetings of the Council are organised every year (one of them during the yearly WONCA-Europe conference), and its tasks include:

- To make and approve proposals about scientific meetings, workshops, seminars and publications;
- To discuss and endorse recommendations in prevention and health promotion in primary care;
- To participate in different forums in prevention and health promotion representing EUROPREV as a network organization within WONCA Region Europe.

At the present time, the following 21 European countries are represented in EUROPREV: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Three other countries – the Czech Republic, Bosnia and Ukraine – have contacted EUROPREV through members of their national colleges during the WONCA-Europe Conference in Florence (August 2006), and it is expected that they will join before the end of the year 2006.

Family doctors/general practitioners and other primary care professionals involved in prevention and health promotion can also be **individual members** of EUROPREV.

Activities, research and publications

Besides the two EUROPREV Council meetings organised every year, **workshops** and open **symposia** regarding topics of prevention and health promotion in primary care are organised on a regular basis within the yearly WONCA-Europe Conference. Moreover, in November 2000, a two-day 'International Workshop on Tobacco and Alcohol Addiction', organised jointly with EURACT – European Academy of Teachers in General Practice, was hosted in Barcelona by SemFYC. Participants discussed counselling in the management of smoking cessation and problem drinking in primary care.

During the 11th WONCA-Europe Conference which took place in Kos, Greece, in September 2005, EUROPREV for the first time organised a one-day pre-conference meeting on 'Facilitating Health Behaviour Change'. The success of this meeting prompted its repetition at the 12th WONCA-Europe Conference in Florence, Italy, in August 2006, again as a one-day pre-conference meeting on 'Counselling About Healthy Behaviours: Helping People Change'. Members from EURACT found this conference very interesting and have proposed the joint organisation of a session on this topic in October 2007 at the 13th Wonca-Europe Conference in Paris.

During the 11th WONCA-Europe Conference, EUROPREV also officially launched the first in a series of planned **guides on counselling healthy activities**. The first guide, called 'EUROPREV Healthy Diet – Promoting a healthy diet through counselling in primary care' (1), is being translated for dissemination to healthcare professionals in primary care around Europe. The second guide called 'Counselling Physical Activity in Daily Practice' is being prepared for publication by the end of 2006.

The year 2005 marked the publication as a **scientific paper** of EUROPREV's first major **research project**, namely 'Prevention and health promotion in clinical practice: the views of general practitioners in Europe' (2). Here over 2000 European GPs were questioned during 2000 on their attitudes and knowledge on the subject. Other EUROPREV projects which have resulted in scientific publications involved research on dietary advice in clinical practice (3) and on healthy diet in primary care (4). Another study on the role of European GPs in influenza vaccination presented by EUROPREV at the 2nd European Influenza Conference (September 2005, Malta) is to be prepared as a report for the European Journal of General Practice.

Being WONCA-Europe's representative network on the topic of prevention and health promotion, EUROPREV acted on behalf of the European Society in the elaboration of important European **guidelines** on cardiovascular disease prevention in clinical practice (5). EUROPREV was then invited by the European Journal of General Practice to write an **editorial** commenting on the same guidelines (6).

The Future

So far EUROPREV has had to depend for financial support on the generosity of its Spanish hosts and the fees of its member associations, while devoting part of its limited resources to seeking alternative funding from other sources. However, at the WONCA-Europe Council meeting held on 27th August 2006 in Florence, some financing was proposed and approved for the first time for EUROPREV (as well as for EURIPA – the European Rural and Isolated Practitioners Association - and the Vasco da Gama Movement - the WONCA Europe Working Group for Young and Future General Practitioners).

The WONCA Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Advisory Group has been recently created, and EUROPREV has been invited to participate jointly with other members of other WONCA organisations. The first task will be to review the draft of the European Guidelines of 4th Joint Task Force on CVD Prevention in Europe.

A EUROPREV research project on patients' views on preventive services and lifestyle is planned as a follow-up to its first major project regarding the views of general practitioners (2). While WONCA-Europe has approved some funding (\$5000), negotiations are taking place with an international manufacturer of foods, home care and personal care which is interested in sponsoring part of this large project (21 European countries have confirmed their participation so far) through an educational grant.

Following the decision of the WONCA-Europe Council taken in August 2006 to grant some funding to EUROPREV, it is hoped that the efforts and hard work of EUROPREV over the past 10 years will be recognised by WONCA-Europe through its elevation in the near future to the same status enjoyed its three 'elder' sister networks. The resulting financial investment would definitely encourage EUROPREV to strive for greater achievements in the field of prevention and health promotion during its next 10 years... and beyond!

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