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WONCA Europe's New Family Medicine Definition and Sustainable Healthcare Knowledge

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The European Definition of Family Medicine was revised this year by the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) Europe.^[1] One health, Planetary Health and Sustainability, was added to the discipline to create the bedrock for a new integrated approach in the 2023 edition. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "One Health" is an approach to the design and implementation of programs, research, legislation, and policies in which multiple sectors work together to accomplish better public health outcomes.^[2] The WHO defines "sustainable healthcare" as a health system that maintains, improves, or restores health while minimizing negative environmental impacts and leveraging opportunities to improve it for the benefit of the health of current and future generations.^[3] Planetary health is, on the other hand, the health of human culture and the health of the natural systems on which it relies.

Primary care can positively impact healthcare sustainability and address climate and natural environment change.^[4] As specified in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand in hand with improving health and education as well as reducing inequalities.^[5]

Family doctors are in a unique position to promote knowledge about planetary health and sustainability and to encourage changes in behavior.^[4] Therefore, family doctors need to strive to integrate sustainability into how they behave and how they practice.

For this matter, the authors welcome the new definition. In the past few months, they have been surveying the knowledge of European family doctors about sustainable healthcare to raise awareness and advocate for more training on the topic. They developed a knowledge survey that consisted of 5 multiple-choice questions (MCQ) and 3 open-ended questions, as well as a characterization of the participants, including demographic information and previous training in sustainable healthcare. The survey was distributed through the European Young Family Doctor's Movement network. In the first round, 49 answers were collected from 13 nationalities (41.7% Turkish). The preliminary results showed that most participants had some knowledge of what sustainable healthcare meant (average score for MCQ was 2.3 out of 5). Qualitative data, which was analyzed by three different researchers, found that many of the participants did not know the correct meaning of the term. The primary results were



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presented at WONCA Europe's conference in June 2023 in Belgium, fostering a dialog among peers and ultimately suggesting distributing the survey further.

Advocating for urgent global issues is only possible if adequate knowledge is possessed and effectively communicated. Raising awareness on the new definition of Family Medicine by WONCA Europe is therefore pivotal to positively impact our communities, patients, and the environment. As young researchers, the authors have identified the need to extend this survey to more colleagues, assessing their knowledge of sustainable healthcare. The authors are striving to collect a wider range of data from more countries.

Disclosures

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