

THE VASCO DA GAMA MOVEMENT

10 years sailing, much more to discover



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1. *Preface*



16th April, 2014

Congratulations to all past and present members of the Vasco da Gama Movement on 10 very successful years supporting the young and future family doctors of Europe and the rest of the world. You should all feel very proud about your achievements of the past 10 years.

Through your advocacy and activities, you are shining a light on not only why a career as a family doctor is interesting and exciting and worthwhile, but also on why our work as family doctors is essential to the health and well-being of all the people of each of our nations.

Our roles will strengthen even further over the years to come which makes the partnership between WONCA and the Vasco da Gama Movement now more important than ever.

WONCA is very pleased to continue our strong support to the members of the Vasco da Gama Movement in the important work that you do. I am especially grateful for the way you have supported the development of junior family doctor movements in other regions of the world. I look forward to continuing to be inspired by your initiatives and contributions in the years to come.

Best wishes

Professor Michael Kidd AM
President
World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA)



Congratulations to the Vasco da Gama Movement and Family Medicine

“If I have a thousand ideas and only one turns out to be good, I am satisfied.”

Alfred Bernhard Nobel

In 2014, we celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Vasco da Gama Movement (VdGM) which started as the Junior Doctors Project, at the WONCA Europe Amsterdam 2004 Conference. The idea was to bring trainees and young family doctors together so they could discuss the differences in health care systems and postgraduate training in family medicine, in Europe. It was thought and hoped that this introduction would encourage them to come to the following year's conference and would build up a younger audience.

The project was a success. It has developed into a movement – the Vasco da Gama Movement - which has become an important force in rejuvenating all the activities of WONCA Europe and expanding the audience of the WONCA Europe conferences.

Europe proved to have many great trainees and young doctors who were interested in the development of their family medicine discipline. The VdGM has now stimulated a decade of discussions. It has set up exchange programs throughout Europe and beyond, which have become immensely popular. The Hippokrates and the Claudio Carosino prizes stimulate participants of these exchange programs to reflect and write about what they learnt from their exchange. More trainees and young doctors have become involved in small research projects stimulated by collaboration with EGPRN. Further collaboration between the VdGM and all the WONCA Europe Networks has been established. The VdGM has led by example and supported the development of similar young doctors'



movements in other regions of WONCA World. Members of the VdGM continually show great leadership with their plans and ensuing actions.

The VdGM also changes the lives of the trainees and young doctors who are its members. They have seen the challenges for the future and discovered that they can make a difference - that they are needed to make a difference. VdGM has inspired many trainees and young family doctors, but also “seniors” have looked on with astonishment and been inspired by the energy VdGM members seem to possess.

Membership of VdGM ends five years after finishing postgraduate family medicine specialty training, but several “old” VdGM members have found their way into the representative ranks of member organisations, continuing to serve the future of our discipline.

I have no doubt that the VdGM will continue to play an important role in WONCA Europe: in the ongoing growth of collaboration between the different organisations within WONCA Europe, and also in the collaboration with other health care related organizations such as the World Health Organization.

As WONCA Europe President, I am grateful for the enthusiasm, the critical approach and the stimulus for change brought by my colleagues from the VdGM. My congratulations on the achievements of a decade go to the Vasco da Gama Movement and as a consequence also to European Family Medicine for the progress we have made in that time.

Job FM Metsemakers
President WONCA Europe

Professor of Family Medicine,
Chair Department of Family Medicine
Maastricht University
Maastricht, the Netherlands

2. Introduction



It is with great pleasure that we present this book, which aims to tell the story of the first 10 years of the Vasco da Gama Movement (VdGM).

From an idea into a project, passing to the execution, it maintains nowadays a continuum of more ideas and projects.

This continuing and intense activity contributes to the Family Medicine / General Practice development and maintains the enthusiasm of european trainees and young Family Doctors / General Practicioners.

Like a virus, it attempts to spread around the globe, encouraging and supporting the creation of similar movements in other continents – this is the true Vasco da Gama spirit!

We tried to gather the stories told by founders and developers of this project.

Like diferent nationalities and cultures, contributions are marked by the diversity of styles and formats – we tried to be faithful to them, making very few changes.

On a more personal note, allow me to express my gratitude to the role of Vasco da Gama Movement in my training as a Family Doctor. With this book, I feel happy, emotional and confident in the future of this Movement.

This book is a way to give back all that Vasco da Gama gave us, tell our story and encourage current and new colleagues to belong to the great WONCA family!

We thank all the storytellers who welcomed this initiative. We recall that they are representatives of all those who were and are involved with the Vasco da Gama Movement somehow.

We hope VdGM's contribution to the development of Family Medicine / General Practice continues for many years to come.

See you arround!

Catarina Matias

Family Doctor

Nacional Exchange Coordinator (Hippokrates Programme) – Portugal

VdGM's Pre-conference Manager 2014

3. The begining of a journey: the shipbuilders



Birgit Morre Pedersen

Denmark

President of VdGM 2005-2007

I finished medical studies from University of Copenhagen in 1998.

In 2005, I qualified as a GP in Aarhus. In 2005/2006, I worked one year in the north of Greenland as a District Doctor. In 2009, I started my own clinic with 1600 listed patient in Aarhus. I share the staff and laboratory facilities with three other doctors.

Once or twice a year I host a GP-trainee from another country for one or two weeks, through the Hippocrates Programme now run by VdGM. Each time a rewarding experience and I get news from VdGM.

My VdGM-journey starts by chance and good luck. I have always had a great passion for travelling, meeting different people and exchanging ideas. For this reason I was invited to participate in the first Pre-conference for young doctors in Amsterdam in 2004. The meeting was an enormous success and I was elected as the Danish representative in the forum of young doctors formed at this meeting.

Our first meeting of this group of representatives was hosted by the Portuguese organisation in Lisbon 2005. Because of this location and the adventurous image, we chose the name of Vasco da Gama for this new movement. A very special thank I would like to bring to the four senior doctors in the picture below, present at this meeting. Without the dedication and inspiration of these men, VdGM had never existed.

In this meeting we also decided to create the pre-conferences of VdGM prior to Wonca Europe conferences as the core activity of the movement. The first was held in Kos, Greece in 2005. We soon experienced the need for an organisational structure, funding and a website.

The coregroup met in London in January 2006. In this meeting, we developed the organisational structure that is still useful today. Also, I was appointed as the first

president by anonymous voting. It took a lunch break of consideration before taking up the challenge.

The next important milestone was the official recognition by Wonca Europe in Florence 2006. At this meeting, we also granted financial support from Wonca Europe. The greatest challenge was to secure the continuity because of the changing members of young doctors. I am very pleased to see that you have managed to continue and develop the movement.

My visions for VdGM were to create a forum for exchange of ideas in ways of working and training for GP/FM in Europe. To inspire and motivate young doctors to improve their skills of our speciality. To provide support for all European countries to create national organisations for young doctors. For me personally it has been of great inspiration and motivation, meeting all the other young and enthusiastic doctors, always discussing intensively until late hours, getting tons of new ideas and perspectives on all aspects of family medicine.

I hope that I have contributed with my knowledge and experience in organisational matters and my passion for exchange of ideas across borders, to start of this journey of VdGM in a constructive and inspiring way.

My wishes for the next 10 years of GP/FM are that we continue the positive development of dialog centred consultations, research in relevant GP settings, adapting new technologies, not forgetting the individual patients and keep exchanging ideas across borders and generations.

Think globally, act locally.



Lisbon 2005

From left Luís Pisco, Portugal, Fons Sips, The Netherlands, Justin Allen, UK, Sakis Symeonidis, Greece.

Erik Teunissen
the Netherlands

I am 42 years old and I work in the Netherlands, as a GP in a practice with four colleagues combined with work as a researcher at the Radboud University Medical Center. I work on a project called Restore, a European primary care project to overcome language and cultural barriers between migrants and primary care professionals. With my wife and three children I live in a medieval city called Deventer in the eastern part of the Netherlands.

Ten years ago, we - a group of junior GP's - organised, with support of senior members of WONCA, the first Pre-conference meeting for junior doctors in Amsterdam. This was an inspiring meeting as for many of us it was the first time we got in contact with junior doctors from all over Europe. Thanks to VdGM, I learned to present workshops with colleagues from all over the world, and I got the opportunity to present a key-note lecture at the WONCA Conference in Granada.

For the next ten years, I wish that VdGM will continue to support junior GP's and GP-trainees who work in countries where primary care systems are less well developed. In my opinion, this support is essential for those who work in a country where primary care isn't necessarily seen as an essential element of the health care system.

For the future, I hope that GP's and GP-trainees will play a leading role in international, national and regional primary care organisations. The input of the new generation is imperative to further modernise primary care and I hope the new generation is willing to pick up this role. For now, I congratulate VdGM with this first 10 year anniversary and I hope the following 10 years will be as successful as the previous.



Fatma Goksin Cihan
Turkey

Pre-conference, Istanbul 2008

I have started my postgraduate family medicine training in December 2000 and graduated in March 2004. I had worked in my private office and was responsible for 4150 people. Since 2011, I have been a teacher in family medicine. I am an assistant professor in Konya NE University Family Medicine Department now. I was one of the Turkish delegates attending the first preconference meeting for junior doctors during the WONCA Europe Conference in Amsterdam in 2004. I am proud for being one of the cofounders of VdGM, I had been an executive member till 2009. I was the Pre-conference Manager 2008, which was held in Istanbul.

When we were invited to Junior Doctors' Project in 2004, it was like a dream to be noticed as a junior doctor for many countries. In the following years, many national trainee organisations were founded and reduced conference fees for all junior doctors was accomplished. By meeting with other countries' junior doctors, we had realized that there were so many differences in training schemes and on the role of GP in the health care system of the different European countries.

At WONCA Europe Council Meeting in Florence, 27 August 2006, an agreement was approved about Vasco da Gama Movement's official recognition and support by WONCA Europe. VdGM is working closely with WONCA Europe and core networks (EURACT, EGPRN and EQuIP) to promote the discipline of General Practice / Family Medicine. Also, VdGM contributes to documents of WONCA Europe and liaised networks, especially in regard to representing opinion of young and future GPs/FPs. VdGM members are actively participating the main conferences along with Pre-conferences.

VdGM has been inspiring for many international and national junior doctor organisations. It is very pleasing that now, in the 10th year of VdGM, the organisation is well known, not only in Europe but also worldwide.

VdGM has played an important role in my career and my social life. Sharing our experiences with international friends, enlarged my vision in my daily practice and motivated me as a FP. I had many memorable times in VdGM and I wish every junior doctor can experience this. I am sure that participation of young and future GPs/FPs in national and international organisations will promote and raise interest in family medicine.

Fons Sips the Netherlands

The conception of the Junior Doctor conference, the starting point of the Vasco da Gama Movement

Alphons Jacobus Ignatius Sips, but they call me Fons Sips.

I was born the 11th August 1940 in Heerlen, the Netherlands.

Secondary education in my hometown, went to the University of Nijmegen and studied medicine and psychology and graduated in both studies. After passing my exam as medical doctor in 1970, I have been working in several GP surgeries to learn this job. We didn't have a vocational training scheme at that time. January 1972, I settled in Vught, a village of about 25.000 inhabitants, in a single handed practice, including pregnancy care and deliveries.

I wrote my thesis about the changing habits of birth control after the introduction of the oral contraceptives in 1964, and the changing attitudes towards sexuality as part of this process. My promoter was professor Frans Huygen, the godfather of general practice in the Netherlands. He advised me to deliver a lecture on this subject at the SIMG conference in Klagenfurt in 1983. This was the begin of my involvement in the development of GP/FM in Europe.

I was secretary in the board of the dutch colleges of GP/FM from 1987 – 1994. We initiated a process of the development of standards of good care on a scientific basis. In 1987, I became a member of SIMG board, later vice president and president of the SIMG. We started a process of amalgamation of SIMG and WONCA. Both organisations have been competing but we ended up with one organisation, the European Chapter of WONCA World. An umbrella structure including the national colleges and the European network organisations, at that time: EURACT, EGPRW and EQuiP. This was celebrated on the 5th October 1995 with an Inaugural Conference in the meeting room of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. All the European Colleges were gathered there and elected a new Executive Committee. The beginning of a new area for GP/FM in Europe. For me, the end of my presidency.

In 1996, I was invited for a part-time job as senior teacher at the university of Maastricht, my function staff docent in the vocational training scheme. As before, I combined that with my duties as a GP in Vught, for several years already working together with a younger colleague. I continued to work as GP until 2006 when I retired.

The Vasco da Gama Movement

In 2002, our colleges of the conference organising committee approached me, when preparing the 2004 WONCA Europe Conference in Amsterdam, if I was available for the committee to organise a part of the conference, illustrating the European dimension of GP/FM for the dutch trainees. Their initial plan was a parallel conference with lectures on several aspects that should be interested for our trainees, and invite appropriate speakers on this matter, and I should find them. A European Working party had just finished an extensive document on these matters: "The European definition of general practice / family medicine." Apart from that, there was only a limited budget for this project. I myself was seriously in doubt if the average trainee would have serious interest in European matters. Though I suggested: send a copy of the document to every trainee in GP and quite everything else.

I myself was convinced that maybe there was an interest within the group of trainees for what was going on in Europe about General Practice / Family Medicine. How were young doctors trained in the rest of Europe. Of course, it was important to have an exchange of experience and expertise, and youngsters should open their minds for similar developments elsewhere in Europe. But only a limited number in the group of students was really interested in these matters.

I held a plea for the quality of the participants and not the quantity. An effective exchange needed the dynamic of an international group to carry the message. That meant: spend the money to host an international group of trainees.

Select the well motivated and already involved youngsters to work together. Create the best available atmosphere and select the most appropriate staff to stir the project.

Totgether with EURACT and a small and enthusiastic working party of trainees here in the Netherlands we developed the project: a pre-conference meeting for six international groups, each with 12 student, with two Euract teachers to guide the group. Step by step, we convinced the conference organising committee. We found additional money and finally we had the conference, the starting point of the Vasco da Gama Movement. Ten yours ago. Reading the archive documents, the correspondence, the reports of the meeting, all that happened during that pre-conference, and seeing the pictures, it's like a boys dream that came true.

It takes time and energy to win them for this plan.



Fons Sips (2005) with a bust of Hippocrates



Frank Peters-Klimm
GP, PhD, Germany

Started vocational training in 2000 and specialized in internal medicine and in GP. Started academic work at the Department of General Practice and Health Services Research, University Hospital Heidelberg in 2004, and received his “venia legendi” in 2011. Functions as senior researcher and clinical lecturer, and runs a group practice since 2014. German National Representative for EGPRN.

Interests comprise many aspects in the field of primary care, including clinical work, research and education.

Storming

My journey with Vasco da Gama Movement started as one of three German delegates for the first Pre-conference at the WONCA Europe meeting in Amsterdam in 2005, which was prepared by a group of Dutch senior and junior doctors and moderated carefully by senior members of EURACT. The workshop needed to be prepared by each participant, not only increased knowledge about one owns’ situation but also enabled us to meet other bright colleagues and to learn about the position of the General Practice specialty in each national healthcare system. Many participants perceived this as a real eye opener and wanted to commit themselves in whatever way.

In January 2006, a bunch of motivated young doctors and inspiring guiding senior colleagues from EURACT, especially Fons Sips and (later) Yvonne van Leeuwen (NL) and Justin Allen (UK) met in Lisboa and discussed intensively and productively about aims, goals, action, structure and affiliation of a continued group. After having set the aims, which are still valid (on the webpage), we agreed on focusing firstly on the continuation of the successful pre-conference. From the very beginning, the first generation of the group started to think about long-term continuation and sustainability and it was at this

meeting that the name VdGM was chosen, with the vision that we were starting a long journey with high aspirations, but hopefully beneficial to general practice.

Norming

During the pre-conferences at the following WONCA meetings at Kos and in Florence more participants became interested in commitment. This motivated the first generation of the group to prepare a constitution and structure to get sustained functionality. I remember additional meetings with great colleagues in Maastricht, Mechelen and Lisboa. In Paris 2007, not only the constitution came out but also theme groups formed where participants could contribute to more specific topics.

Performing

Since then I followed more intensively the idea that emerged from the beginning: asking trainees about their views on vocational training, so that trainees could have a voice in sensitive topics such as motivation for career choice, which affects recruitment and strategies for enhancement, but also - depending on the country - the development or maintenance of high quality standards of vocational training.

Therefore, we designed a questionnaire in the ‘Education and Training Theme Group’ of the VdGM. A first draft was developed in English in 2006 in Florence and presented to GP trainers in Italy, and modified thereafter. Following discussion and feedback from members of EURACT and EGPRN in September 2007 in Paris, the draft was adapted and discussed with members from the Specialty Training Committee from EURACT. A panel-test was then performed by 30 trainees and young GPs from five European countries (Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Spain and The Netherlands) in spring 2008 for further refinements using structured feedback forms. Researchers from the Department of GP and Health Services Research, University Hospital Heidelberg, Germany, evaluated this panel-test and refined the questionnaire accordingly (1, 2).

The VdGM structure and network served then for recruitment of participating countries. Seven Council Members of VdGM from Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway, Portugal and UK adopted the survey and built a national study team. Their surveys were carried out between 2008 and 2010. Results were presented at WONCA Meetings (3-5) and published in journals (6-8). In June 2014, results on international data (9) regarding motivation for career choice and job satisfaction will be available (10).

How did VdGM contribute to improvements in countries apart from raising awareness? From my German perspective, the VdGM activities were an important starting point for the development of a competence-based curriculum and the development of a model for improved GP Vocational Training in Germany (10), widely acknowledged and partly adopted in other parts of Germany. The so called “Verbundweiterbildung plus” tackles weaknesses of German vocational training in form and content (11): these are e.g. adequate salary, structured rotations across different specialties and regular meetings and seminars held by experienced teachers.

I wish that future generations of GP/FM and trainees/young doctors remain curious, open-minded, critical thinking and ambitious to contribute to academic work. From a societal perspective, General Practice is needed more than ever since the last decades, being a GP is satisfying and rewarding in daily work. Moreover, as our specialty needs a strong representation in functioning political and academic structures, additional engagement is essential and everybody should ask herself and himself what she or he could do in this regard!



Jan 2006, London - Meeting of founders of VdGM and senior advisors Justin Allen and Fons Sips (EURACT) in the early development phase of VdGM, at the Royal College of General Practitioners

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Ingrid van der Heijden
the Netherlands

Born 1973, Maastricht

GP-trainee 2000-2003 Maastricht vocational training department

Since 2003, GP in group practice 'Heugem' in Maastricht and staff member GP vocational training department Maastricht

Honorary secretary in the first invitational WONCA junior doctors pre-conference Amsterdam 2004

Honorary secretary of VdGM 2005-2009

VdGM – the past

Fons Sips (honorary member/ founding father of VdGM) was my tutor during vocational training. He passed on his enthusiasm for the global dimension of General Practice. It was a great opportunity that the 2004 WONCA Europe Conference in Amsterdam coincided with the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the Dutch GP Training Foundation (SBOH). To mark this special occasion, SBOH financially facilitated the organisation of the first junior doctor pre-conference during the WONCA Europe Conference.

Fons Sips had adequately sensed the need for a platform for junior GPs and he had taken on the initiative to further develop his plan. Erik Teunissen, Justian Hofmans and I – all representatives from dutch GP-trainee network (LOVAH) – got involved and with support from the Dutch college of GPs (NHG) we began planning the preconference.

EURACT embraced our plans from the beginning and made sure that six inspiring EURACT teachers were available as group facilitators for the pre-conference meeting. The EURACT teachers were coupled with six dutch GP trainers. These teacher-teams supervised the groupwork of a group of 10-12 GP trainees. The groups consisted of 5-6 national GP trainees, the other half composed of a mix of European GPs. In this way 66 junior GPs from all over Europe were initiated. This format proved to be so successful

that it has since been repeated at many following junior doctor pre-conferences.

The first junior doctor pre-conference in 2004 was vibrant, inspiring and motivating; several GP trainees realised that this opportunity should be consolidated. At the last day of the pre-conference, they have launched a joint proposal to further develop a platform for meeting for European junior GPs.

The birth of VdGM

A few months later, the Portuguese College of GPs (APMCG) were to host the next meeting of this young and enthusiastic group. In Lisbon – home port of Vasco da Gama – it was decided that this group of junior GP-explorers would call themselves VdGM. Maastricht GP Vocational Training Institute invited the VdGM members in May 2005 to participate in the national GP teachers conference (LHOV); thus providing opportunity to the group to meet, discuss, develop their structure and and shape their identity.

Supported by WONCA Executive board, by EURACT and by several national colleges, the group took on their first and main responsibility: to organise another successful pre-conference meeting in Kos, Greece, preceding the WONCA Europe 2005 Conference.

During the next informal meeting in London, UK, hosted by the Royal College of GP (RCGP), the structure of VdGM was further defined and goals were set. It was there and then that the drafting of the constitution took shape and the first President was elected: Birgit Morre Pedersen.

In the next years, VdGM further elaborated on their goals, set up working groups, and expanded their organisational structure to involve as many European junior GPs as possible through the VdGM Executive Board, Europe Council, themegroups and VdGM internet forum.

I have fond memories of the VdGM meetings; it has been so inspiring to work in this dedicated group of warm individuals.

It was rewarding that so many participants of the VdGM pre-conference meetings have expressed over and over again the pre-conference to be a much appreciated initiation into the European dimension of General Practice. It seems to me that the 2004 pre-conference has ignited a fire in junior GPs all over Europe; with VdGM being the first to assemble and many more national junior GP networks to follow. I am pleased to have been part of it.

Present

If I look at the current VdGM, I am proud to see that the organisation has professionalised. The VdGM website is smart and user-friendly, information is easily found. Many aims

that we had identified in the beginning are still relevant and are work in progress.
Core business of VdGM – in my opinion – remains providing platform and opportunity for exchange of reality and dreams of junior GPs.

Future

My wish for the future of VdGM is that they will continue to encourage and inspire junior GPs to participate and share their knowledge, experiences and ideas.
To motivate them to take up responsibility to help shape the future of General Practice.
Light the fire in many hearts!

To finish, some names to remember...

...The Junior GPs who were involved from beginning:

Birgit Morre Pedersen (Denmark) > first President VdGM

Donata Kurpas (Poland)

Erik Teunissen (Netherlands)

Fatma Goskin Cihan (Turkey)

Frank Peters Klimm (Germany)

Ingrid van der Heijden (Netherlands) > honorary Secretary VdGM

João Sequeira Carlos (Portugal)

Majid Jalil (UK)

Monica Knutsen (Norway)

Monica Novac (Romania)

Stijn Festraets (Belgium)

...The first pre-conference managers:

Kos 2005 - Dimitris Karanasios (Greece)

Florence 2006 - David Fasoletti (Italy) and Andrea Moser (Italy)

Paris 2007 - Stijn Festraets (Belgium)

Istanbul 2008 - Fatma Goksin Cihan (Turkey)

Basel 2009 - Monika Reber Feissli (Switzerland)

...The EURACT teachers that warmly supported us from the beginning (amongst others):

Justin Allen (UK) (announced Honorary Member VdGM in 2005)

Yvonne van Leeuwen (Netherlands)

Luís Filipe Gomes (Portugal)

Egle Zebiene (Lithuania)

Roar Maagaard (Denmark)

Jan Heyrman (Belgium)

Athanasios Simeonidis (Greece)

Mladenka Vric-Keglevic (Croatia)



Feb 2013 - Mini Hippokrates at Aveiro



João Sequeira Carlos, MD

Portugal

**President of the 19th Wonca Europe Conference
(Lisbon 2014)**

**President of the APMGF (Portuguese Association
of General Practice and Family Medicine)**

President of VdGM 2007-2009

10 Years – faraway so close An elegy to VdGM on the occasion of its 10th anniversary celebration

**“The great republic of medicine knows
and has known no national boundaries...”**

Sir William Osler

Medicine has no national boundaries. It's a unique and millenary characteristic of our profession. Taking care of our patients with compassion, empathy and knowledge is an always event inherent to every physician's labour since Hippocrates. Practising medicine with the broad vision and humanism has driven our job to be universal, and wherever a doctor meets a patient we may find the same language and gestures.

That simple feature granted to medicine an aura of global art and science shared by professionals committed with a timeless mission – caring for patients respecting a collective oath. Progressively those conjecture turned to be a multinational quality of medicine being considered, maybe, the most eclectic profession of the world.

Consequently it is not surprising that since ever, physicians from different nations felt the need to meet each other. Medicine's international conferences and meetings were probably the most ancient ones, as well as it was also the field of science pioneer, worldwide, to create academic societies and professional associations.

Following the global trend, the first General Practice and Family Medicine (GP/FM)

Associations were founded in the middle of the twentieth century and briefly originated international organizations. WONCA Europe is a young organization created in 1995 from SIMG (Societas Internationalis Medicinae Generalis) and is almost celebrating its 20th anniversary.

This introductory historical short note is inevitable when the challenge is to write some words about the memories of the first decade of Vasco da Gama Movement (VdGM). It is also unavoidable to remember two components of VdGM history – the backstage preparatory work to create what would be later the WONCA Europe Working Group for Young and Future General Practitioners (2003 to 2004) and the first year of VdGM development (2004 to 2005).

In 2003, I was a GP/FM trainee and member of the executive board of Portuguese Association of GP/FM (APMGF). In March 2003, Arno Timmermans, on that time, president of the Dutch College of General Practitioners (NHG), was invited for APMGF National Conference. I met him in Portugal, introduced by Luis Pisco, on that time president of APMGF. We had the chance to exchange some ideas about a possible meeting of junior doctors in Amsterdam, where the WONCA Europe Conference of the following year was being organized.

It is precious to remark this small detail, because one year later, the formal announcement of the first WONCA Europe pre-conference meeting for young and future GPs was made. I cannot forget in this story Fons Sips, a remarkable colleague and outstanding friend. He was also involved on the organization of Amsterdam's event as Chairman of the Committee for Junior Doctor Programme.

Meanwhile until Amsterdam, we had a continuously work by e-mail and a last face-to-face preparatory meeting in Ljubljana, during the 9th WONCA Europe Conference. I still remember chatting with Fons Sips in Ljubljana's castle pointing some ideas about the Junior Doctor Programme and also about a possible effort to create a specific network for the younger GP/FM representatives.

June 2004 came quickly, and finally 66 colleagues representing 13 countries met in Amsterdam, invited to participate in the Invitational Pre-conference Meeting for trainees and junior doctors in GP/FM, promoted by NHG, GP/FM Vocational Training National Institute in Netherlands (SBOH) and the European Academy of Teachers in General Practice (EURACT).

There are no words to express the accurate sentiments that 10 years later we still feel about the very first steps of VdGM. From the group work in the pre-conference, a

strong will was driven motivating all the participating countries to create a new network. A first general assembly was organized, and a declaration of intent was approved to create a network under the umbrella of WONCA Europe. The meeting was held in a hall of the Congress Centre on the 2nd June, and in the next few days WONCA Europe accepted the intention.



June 2004, Amsterdam - first general assembly

An important page of WONCA Europe history was just been written on that day and another positive fact could be added to the excellent conference of Amsterdam. The enthusiasm of junior doctors was a decisive contribution to 10th WONCA Europe Conference success. Before leaving Amsterdam, the group had still some time to appoint the first provisional committee to run the group until next steps.

June 2004, Amsterdam - from left to right, in front line, João Sequeira Carlos (Portugal), Monica Novac (Rumania), Majid Jalil (UK), Birgit Morre Pedersen (Denmark) and Fatma Goksin Cihan (Turkey). In the back line from left to right, Stijn Festraets (Belgium), Erik Teunissen (Netherlands), Hege Rike Fossum (Norway) and Frank Peters (Germany). Also from the provisional executive group but not in the picture – Ingrid van der Heijden (Netherlands), Loncar Sasa (Bosnia and Hercegovina) and Donata Kurpas (Poland).



The next big challenge was just around the corner... the 17th WONCA World Conference in the USA, in October 2004. We saw that as the best opportunity to spread the word at global level. The organizing committee arranged a pre-conference symposium for family medicine residents. The news from Europe was already known across Atlantic Ocean and they invited us to present the European Network for Trainees and Junior Doctors.

Following the enthusiasm of European region of WONCA, the group assembled in Orlando decided to create a special interest group for junior doctors in WONCA World structure. The contacts with colleagues from other WONCA regions made us more visible and gave us the place of leadership. Following the example of Europe, the effort to establish similar groups around the world began.

Even after the success of world exposure, the foundation process of VdGM was still a work in progress. The network adopted a solid program of e-mail communication between the interim executive group and at the same time between the participants of Amsterdam's pre-conference through a web-forum. This communication strategy combined with the determination of keeping the network empowerment led to a virtuous and dynamic development of the group. Always planning ahead and with future vision, we set a clear objective – to organize the second pre-conference in Kos, before the 11th WONCA Europe Conference. That was certainly the turning point to make the group a definitive network of WONCA Europe.

With this clear view in our minds, the interim executive group met presentially, for the first time after Amsterdam. APMGF was our host, and supported the meeting on Lisbon in January 2005. We gathered with our senior advisers – Fons Sips and Justin Allen, on that time president of EURACT – and also Luis Pisco, our host, Athanasios Simeonidis, representing the Kos Conference organizing committee, and Dimitris Karanasios, Greek junior GP as pre-conference manager.

Seeing from today what happened then, we can easily conclude how important it was for the completion of VdGM foundation. In one of the meeting's sessions, a very symbolic episode took place. We were debating the network's name, considering it should be attractive and stimulate questions about it. Our senior advisers suggested it should include the expression "movement" to give the idea of a continuous and dynamic process of development. Suddenly Justin Allen came with the idea of naming it after an ancient Portuguese navigator – Vasco da Gama. Immediately, Fons Sips wrote the name on the flip-chart and draw an old discoveries time ship.



2005, Lisbon - Fons Sips with the first representation of VdGM name and logo

At the same event, a new statement of intent was written in order to ask for definitive official approval from WONCA Europe. In this basilar document, we can read the detailed explanation of VdGM nature and mission, as a real navigation map, that follows.

**Lisbon Statement of Intent
Vasco da Gama Movement
The WONCA Europe Working Group for Young and Future General Practitioners**

“...and those matchless heroes
Who from Portugal’s far western shores
By Oceans where none had ventured
Voyaged to Taprobana and beyond...”
Os Lusíadas
Luis Vaz de Camões, 1572

Young doctors in the WONCA Europe region have established a movement to promote the discipline of general practice/family medicine through:

- a) Providing a forum, support and information for trainees and young GPs through access to WONCA Europe regional conferences and pre-conferences.
- b) Establishing a communication network between European trainees and young GPs and identifying their concerns, doubts and needs and helping to address them.
- c) Improving the quality of training programmes for general practice by establishing a central information database on European programmes, and setting quality standards.

- d) Writing and publishing newsletters concerning the movement for national colleges and associations
- e) Working with host organizing Committees in organising junior doctors preconference meetings held during WONCA Europe regional conferences
- f) Collaborating with national colleges and associations in general practice, and stimulating the formation of national representation of young and future GPs
- g) Collaboration with international organisations of general practice and the representation of the movement at international meetings.

This is a new and exciting movement, setting out on a journey of discovery, developing ideas for the discipline of general practice in the future. These ideas were set down in a meeting in January 2005 in Lisbon, the home port of Vasco da Gama, from where he set out on a similar voyage of discovery, and for this reason his name has been applied to the movement.

It will be formally launched at the Kos WONCA Europe Conference in September 2005.

To help in achieving these ambitions each WONCA Europe organisation is asked to develop a robust process of identifying and sponsoring young and future general practitioners to the movement.

(The movement defines young and future doctors as those in training for general practice and in the first five years after qualification as a GP)

The meeting in Lisbon was decisive to achieve an irreversible status in VdGM. We realized with our senior advisors that the group had a solid structure and a strong rationale. The mission was well aligned with WONCA Europe’s strategy and their support to VdGM was already assumed as certain. I can still feel the confidence we all shared, the motivation that moved us always forward and most of all I can still feel the good sensation of friendship and commitment that linked all the members in the group. All that tight characteristics were essential and with that matrix, our performance was very high.

Between Lisbon and Kos, we had another remarkable meeting in Maastricht, Netherlands. In May 2005 the GP/FM Department of Maastricht University hosted our meeting. Besides the preparatory work to Kos pre-conference we also prepared the planned VdGM presentation for WONCA Europe Council Meeting, where Lisbon’s Statement of Intent would be voted, to formally approve the group as a collaborative network. Maastricht meeting was also an important landmark, since VdGM interim executive group members were invited to participate in the annual Conference of Teachers in GP/

FM, where our active contribution was expected in specific sessions and workshops. That was maybe the first recognition of our relevance outside WONCA events.



May 2005, Maastricht - Interim executive group on the time of Maastricht Meeting. From left to right: Ingrid van der Heijden (Netherlands), Donata Kurpas (Poland), Monica Novac (Rumania), Frank Peters (Germany), Monika Knutsen (Norway), Dimitris Karanasios (Greece), Erik Teunissen (Netherlands), Birgit Morre Pedersen (Denmark), Stijn Festraets (Belgium), Majid Jalil (UK), Fons Sips (Netherlands) and João Sequeira Carlos (Portugal). Also from the interim executive group but not in the picture – Fatma Goksin Cihan (Turkey).

VdGM kept the intense rhythm of work until the 11th WONCA Europe Conference in Kos, Greece. There, the network completed officially the first phase of development started in June 2004 in Amsterdam. WONCA Europe Council Meeting voted favourable to VdGM constitution, being formally accepted as a new group in collaboration within WONCA Europe. The network also achieved a successful second pre-conference meeting, organized together with EURACT and The Greek Association of General Practitioners (ELEGEIA).

The influence of VdGM also became more relevant because of several sessions the group presented, reflecting the work of the pre-conference. In the homeland of Hippocrates, VdGM celebrated its first anniversary with awareness of its responsibility for future steps.



2005, Kos - the VdGM in during the 11th WONCA Europe Conference

As stated by the Working Party of Junior Doctor Project in 2004, at the very beginning of what later became the VdGM, “the enthusiastic involvement of the young participants in European matters is a promise for the future. This is the best way to get the youngsters on board in the unification process of GP/FM in Europe”. We can all subscribe this declaration, and maybe remembering this idea, Igor Svab said in the closing speech in Kos as WONCA Europe president, that VdGM was the best thing that happened to our organisation in the last years.

As a past president of VdGM, between 2007 and 2009, I am still committed with the *primum movens* of VdGM. I will never give up to be a member of this outstanding group. I think all the colleagues who have ever participate in VdGM in some way feel the same. The pioneer group primary objectives are still respected by current members and executive group. The legacy of VdGM will be kept by successive generations of young and future general practitioners. Never forget that we can only build the future and live completely the present if we know the past.

It's a privilege to address these words to congratulate VdGM for its realizations. And It's a great honour to celebrate VdGM 10th anniversary in Lisbon, on the occasion of 19th WONCA Europe Conference.



Justin Allen, Professor
UK

I worked as a GP in the UK for thirty years and for most of that time was actively involved in teaching general practice and was GP Postgraduate Dean at University of Leicester from 2003-2006. In 1992 I was appointed as the first UK representative to EURACT (European Academy of Teachers in General Practice) at its inauguration, and was its President from 2001.

EURACT was invited to participate in a new initiative being taken by the Dutch College as the host of the WONCA Conference in 2004 in Amsterdam. This was to invite young doctors from European countries who were nearing the end of their specialty training or had just completed it to join a pre-conference to meet and discuss their experiences. Those training in the EU were in programmes that met the requirements of the EU Directive so that free movement was allowed between member states. However at this time there was no agreed curriculum or assessment standard except that programmes had to be of a minimum length (2 years in 2004).

For EURACT this initiative was an extremely important step in the evolution of specialty education for general practice. There was no European educational body for trainees or new GPs. Even though there was a shift towards learner centred training programmes, these were being driven in individual countries, and learners were not involved in programme development, methods or evaluation. EURACT had been instrumental in drawing up the European Definition of General Practice with WONCA Europe, and was working on a core curriculum plan, the EURACT Educational Agenda (published in 2005) learner input was minimal.

The young doctors meeting looked at the experiences in different countries and different health care systems and found them to be very different and from their perspective as learners these differences seemed unacceptable. Much of the meeting was spent in small

group discussions, each facilitated by a member of the Dutch College and a EURACT Council member. A new young GP movement was born, thanks to the foresight of our Dutch colleagues.

A steering group was elected then met a few weeks later in Lisbon in January 2005. I was invited as President of EURACT, together with Dr Fons Sips from the Dutch College, to join the working group and help with establishing its structure, aims, and its name – the Vasco Da Gama Movement.

From a EURACT perspective this movement is very important, representing the new family doctors who are delivering the healthcare that our citizens deserve. It is the movement which will provide the teachers and researchers of family medicine, so that we can start to deliver a true learner centred curriculum. From a personal perspective it was a great privilege to work with this dynamic group of young doctors and a pleasure to see the movement flourishing on its 10th anniversary.



Luís Filipe Gomes, MD
Portugal

Specialist in GP/FM; Tutor and Trainer DPC GP/FM; Inv. Prof. Algarve Un. (MIM-UAIG); former Portugal Representative at the EURACT Council; former MSC Chairman; former Secretary General – UEMO.

2004. It was my third year as the Portuguese Representative at the EURACT Council. WONCA had published the “European Definition for General Practice / Family Medicine” in 2002, the “EURACT Educational Agenda” was to come soon, as well as the first “EURACT Leonardo Course for Teachers and Trainers in GP”. We, as other network organisations and WONCA Europe itself, were doing our job.

Yet, GPs in health systems throughout Europe experienced quite different professional and personal situations, there were few similarities between training programmes... And some among us thought that... there were not enough young GPs and trainees in our conferences!

In 2004, the Dutch organised the WONCA Europe Regional Conference – in the fantastic setting of Amsterdam. They decided to create the conditions for GP-trainees to meet, thus giving birth to the “Junior Doctors Project” – later to become the “Vasco da Gama Movement”.

In close collaboration with EURACT, a Pre-conference was organised. 33 delegates from eleven countries were matched with an equal number of trainees from the Netherlands and distributed in six groups.

Each group had two facilitators: a GP trainer from the Netherlands and a EURACT Council Member.

The discussion was lively. Young GPs soon discovered the huge differences among national health care systems. Most of them were surprised to find out how training systems and programmes could vary from country to country within Europe!

The groups produced valuable work, presented to the Wonca Europe Conference delegates in a plenary session. Amidst several important conclusions, one was paramount: the decision to establish a European Network Structure for Junior Doctors.

The Project went on sailing. EURACT maintained its collaboration. In Kos, in Firenze, I had the pleasure and privilege to facilitate new groups of eager young GPs, who brought their ideals and freshness to the conferences.

Many of the group members I (tried to...) facilitate quickly became important assets in GP all over Europe – I remember João Sequeira Carlos, Vojislav Ivetic, Viki Garmiri, David Darmon, Carla Pereira, Ashraf Mirza, Darach O’Ciardha, Chantal Emaus – among others.

The Vasco da Gama Movement now sails by its own means – but it was a great honour and a gratifying experience to be there from the beginning watching and helping the birth!!!

And I hope the young GPs remain young even as they grow older – and don’t lose the will and capacity to fight for General Practice/Family Medicine – and, most of all, for our patients!



Amsterdam, the tutors: Egle Zebiene, Lithuania (EURACT); Filipe Gomes, Portugal (EURACT); Justin Allen, UK (EURACT); Yvonne van Leeuwen, the Netherlands (EURACT); Fons Sips, the Netherlands; Mladenka Vric-Keglevic, Croatia (EURACT); Athanasius Simeonidis, Greece (EURACT); Peter Manschot, Geurt Essers, Herman Bueving and Ben Bottema, the Netherlands; Roar Maagaard, Denmark (EURACT).

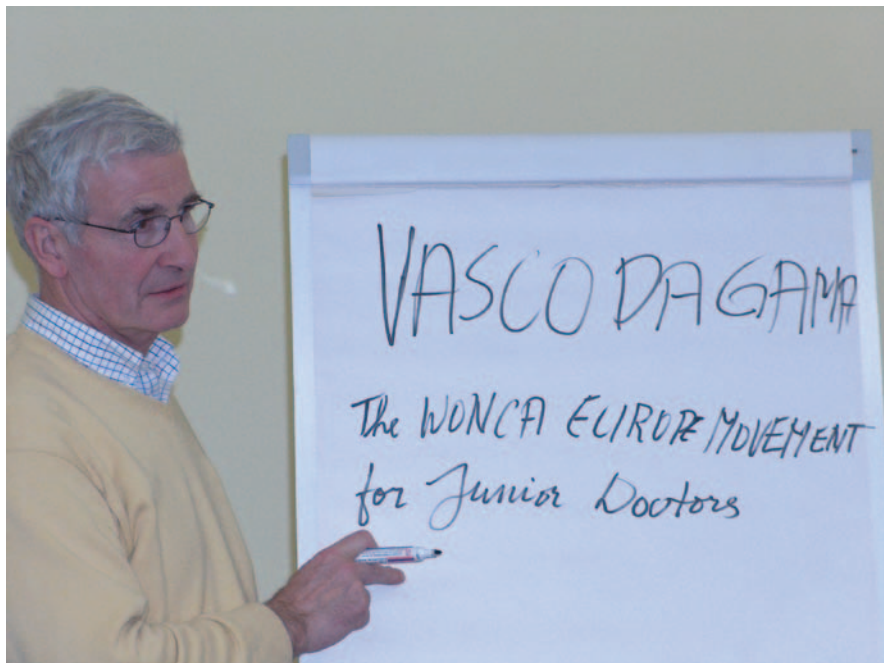
VdGM in Firenze – Group 2: Andrea Moser, Italy; Ellen Louise Kristensen, Denmark; Vojislav Ivetic, Slovenia; Darach O’Ciardha, Ireland; Maria Solis, Spain; David Darmon, France; Ashraf Mirza, United Kingdom; Carla Pereira, Portugal; Luís Filipe Gomes, Portugal (Tutor) Chantal Emaus, The Netherlands; Norma Sartori, Italy (Tutor).





Luís Pisco
Portugal

Specialist in Family Medicine. Vice-President of the Regional Health Authority of Lisbon from October 2011. Coordinator of the Mission for Primary Health Care (2005-2010). Director of the National Institute for Quality in Health (1999-2005). President of the Portuguese Association of General Practitioners (1999-2009). Board Member of the European Society of Family Medicine (2001-2007). Visiting Professor at the Lisbon Nova University, Department of Family Medicine. WONCA and RCGP fellow.



2005, Lisbon – Fons Sips



2005, Lisbon

Vasco da Gama Movement (VdGM) history had a major step in Lisbon when its name and mission was redesigned on the 21st and 22nd of January 2005. And we were definitely linked to the history of this movement, whether by the name chosen, either because the meeting had taken place in Portugal, at the office of the GP Association (APMCG).

The attendants to this first meeting of the VdGM were Dr. Fons Sips, chairman of the working party Junior Doctor Project Amsterdam, 2004, Dr. Justin Allen, President of Euract, Dr. Sakis Simeonidis, member of the HOC Kos Wonca Conference and Secretary of Euract, Dr. Luís Pisco, President of the Portuguese Association of GPs and member of WONCA Executive Board, and Donata Kurpas (Poland), Frank Peters-Klimm (Germany), Erik Teunissen (the Netherlands), Birgit Pedersen (Denmark), Monica Novac (Romania), Monica Knutsen (Norway), Fatma Goksin Cihan (Turkey), Dimitris Karanasios (Greece) and João Sequeira Carlos (Portugal), president of the Movement at the triennium 2007-2009.

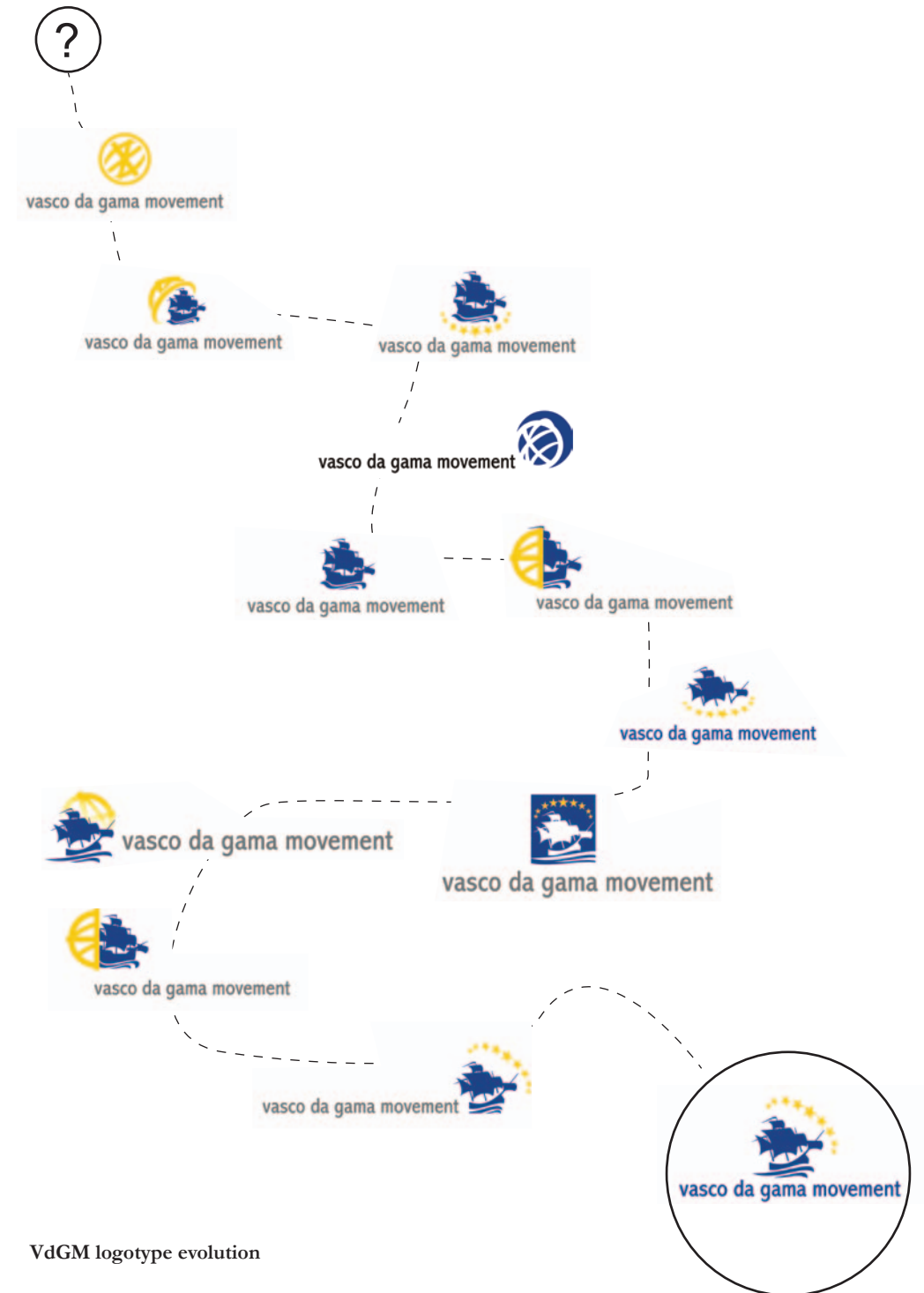
It all started in 2004 at the Wonca Europe Conference in Amsterdam. The Junior Doctor Programme, with 66 participants from 13 European countries, was the kick-off of what would later be known as the VdGM. Nowadays VdGM is a well-structured WONCA

Europe Working Group giving to WONCA the view from the new generation of general practitioners.

The central challenge facing healthcare today is an ageing population. The over 85s are the fastest growing population group in the world, and will double by 2030. Sooner we will have an increasing number of people with dementia but already one-quarter of the population, mainly elderly, have long-term conditions such as arthritis or chronic lung disease. For these people, quality of care at home is just as important as quality of care in hospital. We can afford good quality care for everyone – but only if we undertake a bold and radical transformation in the way primary care is delivered.

We cannot hope to give people the healthcare they need and deserve, if we refuse to face up to difficult realities. Getting the best possible care outside hospitals means we enjoy a higher quality of life, spend fewer days in hospital, and keeps people happy, healthy and safe at home.

VdGM is a new and exciting movement, setting out on a journey of discovery, and will have a major role in developing new ideas for the discipline of Family Medicine in the future but also in the fundamental change in culture needed, a radical shift in our model from reactive to proactive care, from cure to care, from care to prevention and from paternalism to participation. For this we need clinical leadership. Family Doctors know what's best for their patients, and they'll be the drivers for change.



VdGM logotype evolution



Per Kallestrup, MD, PhD

Specialist in Family Medicine

Denmark

Medical Doctor, Specialist in Family Medicine. Works in a large eight-partner-Practice close to Aarhus, Denmark. Chairman of “Partners in Practice” an International Development Programme of the Danish College of General Practitioners devoted to fostering development of Primary Health Care worldwide through established partnerships. Ass. Professor, Director of “Center for Global Health” at Aarhus University (GloHAU) focusing on the contribution of Primary Health Care to Global Health through research and education.

I am very impressed by the energy and vitality that the Vasco da Gama Movement brings into European Family Medicine – it injects a lot of hope and optimism, and it also gives a good amount of vigor and restlessness.

I emphasize my contribution on presenting my view over the future of European Family Medicine, based on three levels of importance – we should always try to incorporate them all in our valuebased considerations and decisions:

- Ourselves – you and I – as individuals
- Our profession as Medical Doctors and particularly as Family Medicine
- Our communities or societies in which we operate or interact.

With regard to these three levels – one cross-cutting issue is ‘openness’. We shall not talk so much about protecting ourselves, no we shall engage and throw ourselves into the equation looking for solutions.

We must not close ourselves into our little cocoon, no we will degenerate into a closed mind of pitiful self-centeredness whining in self-defense – can you hear those tones among yourselves and colleagues? “We are not getting the respect we deserve”, “Family



June 2013 – WONCA World, Prague

Medicine is not being adequately acknowledged”, “budget cuts and priority policies are affecting Primary care unfairly”.

Are these the sounds of Family Medicine across Europe? Sometimes, yes, those are the songs we sing – and as true as they might be, they are not heard in a way that creates change or sympathy for that matter. And among ourselves, they will also only deliver short-lived relief.

Family Medicine is not for sad songs. Family Medicine is not for campaigns and slogans or massive uprisings or demonstrations. Family Medicine is felt. Family Medicine Physicians or GPs are the unsung heroes of everyday – operating where life is lived and among



and along their patients and communities – engaging and acting locally but thinking and embracing globally.

It is with the tenacious, thorough every-day attention to our patients – the constant gardening – that the results, the flowers of our work are appreciated.

Just like we shall not close ourselves internally – we must also keep an open mind externally – towards our colleagues and collaborators in the wider health sector as well as other sectors that impact other determinants affecting health and well-being.

Some of the questions to reflect on:

- Why do we have a need to be equal to other specialties?
- Why do we want to be valued by specialist colleagues more than by patients or communities?

I feel these concerns translates well to the challenges Family Medicine are facing across Europe – off course in various disguises depending on the state or - should I say - status of Family Medicine in the individual countries.

However, I think it is similar for all, that the development of and the continued efforts to define ourselves as a Specialty has taking place – or is taking place – as a reactive process forming ourselves in the picture of the classical medical specialties and we have created or are creating our teaching and research institutions alike.

Paradoxically – as we have been arguing that our patients and working conditions are different, when we reason, why it is necessary to create teaching and research specifically for Family Medicine – we have now ended up in a situation, where I spot a trend that we are distancing ourselves from our subject matter.

In our race to find recognition and acknowledgement as ‘specialists’ – to become true medical specialists – we are forgetting to be different, to be compassionate, embracing collaborators, who serves and thrives best in teams and not in a hierarchical construction nourished by prestige and authority.

We are getting involved in research, quality improvement activities, production of guidelines, endorsing recommendations and requirements etc, etc – everything appropriate and necessary, but the risk is that we forget, where we come from or that we are getting caught up in a charade similar to the fairy tale of the “Emperor’s New Clothes”.

So in summary my best bids at how we can secure and unite European Family Medicine in the future with regard to the three levels of engagement are:

- Individually: throw yourself into the mess, get entangled, ‘don’t be a whiner, be a diner’ – go to life with a grand appetite and share meals. And be sure to share your successes

– use these as a lift for everybody around you, that creates synergy and simultaneously makes you flourish

- Professionally: dare to be different, keep being the voice for a continuous, comprehensive, community-oriented care delivered by a Family Health Team – but also respecting the need for balanced mutually sustained integration with colleagues and collaborators in the wider Health system
- Globally: Engage with your communities, keep promoting possibilities to form Family Health Teams, always think in broader terms of socio-economic and environmental determinants, and get out – go to meetings, do exchanges, participate in and contribute to development across professions and borders.



Yvonne van Leeuwen, GP, PhD
the Netherlands

For nearly 30 years, I have been part-time GP in a village near Maastricht, with additional posts as teacher and researcher at MU. At the time of the start of the first junior doctor meeting in Amsterdam, I was head of vocational training at Maastricht University (MU), the Netherlands. Now I am associate professor there.

From the beginning, VdGM has functioned as a flywheel for young European doctors. Ambitions flourished, skills were developed, pride to be a GP was fostered. Many local GP junior doctor associations came to daylight.

This thrilling enthusiasm is still there, but additionally dreams of the past have transformed into concrete posts in national and international assemblies and GPs societies. For the moment there is no need to change the formula fundamentally, for the target group is new every year and is as thankful as ever for encouragement from international origins. However, social media will intensify interaction and hopefully thereby the influence on political and social assemblies.

The scientific society of GPs asked me in 1994 to provide an opportunity for one of my staff members, Dr. Fons Sips, GP, to organize in Amsterdam a meeting for European Young doctors, which I gladly did. The society provided financial support and approved of a format without lectures and prefab workshops, providing a platform for real interaction!! It was a delight to take part of that event. This had to have a follow-up! And that is what happened.

I have been facilitator for years at the VdGM Pre-conferences, which was enjoyable and inspiring every time again. For several years I have been senior adviser of VdGM, a position of great honor to me. At WONCA 2010 in Malaga, I have presented the VdGM keynote lecture, together with Eric Theunissen, on succession policies in general practice. The last five years, I have been liaison person between VdGM and EURACT.

For the next 10 years, I hope that bureaucracy in GP will be reduced. Normally this goes with a loss of transparency. I hope that ICT will help to find means to match the two. May competencies of GP become better trainable and in the end undisputable, so that a more equal exchange with specialists become the habit. Even more important: may the esteem for the GP in the eyes of governments and population increase.

The core of GP/FM is personalized and comprehensive care. I hope that GPs and trainees continue to be proud of providing this care and refrain from finance driven practices. Society did not evolve in the desired direction in this respect. I hope that GPs will stand for their values.

Refined use of multimedia will facilitate knowledge acquisition and management. Knowledge, however, is not merely information. It is essential to create time and spiritual 'space' to reflect. I hope that designs for future professional development and practice strategies will acknowledge this.

The new generations of family doctors will hopefully enjoy their work as a GP as much as I have done. I hope it will be obvious for future GPs to be trainer as well, some even researcher. I hope that the family of future Vasco da Gama GPs and trainees will promote general practice as the jewel of health care in front of political and social audiences.

4. *Sailing through time
and among lands: the navigators*



AUSTRIA

Christian Claus Schiller, MD, MBA

Born 16.07.1980 in Linz, Austria – medical university of Innsbruck, health care management MBA at Vienna economic university; general practitioner since 2009; medical controlling at the Mercy's Sister Hospital (of St. Vinzenz) in Linz; department of nuclear medicine; austrian representative of VdGM; vice president of JAMÖ, ÖGAM board member; author: „Steuerung von Gesundheitseinrichtungen“ ISBN: 978-3-639-47614-9

From an innovativ idea (creating a small group of spicy youngsters), VdGM grew up to a big group over the past ten years, gaining more and more influence in active procedures of the senior organisation, entering WONCA as a fully accepted member, thinking of these, often not simple circumstances. I think in the upcoming next 10 years, VdGM will active take influence in development processes in the work of GPs and even in the formation process. International connections will spread more and more and strengthen, seeing similar developments in North/South America, Asia and even Afrika now, started up by the help of VdGM.

Innovation in Family Medicine will become more and more important, also recognized by government authorities, thanks to the continous medial influence of the better international connected group, thanks to more focused scientific work and results in the patient health care field (managing all these new knowledge will become very important, what is relevant? How much is relevant? To whom and in which situation? – none can oversee the faster and faster turning up new studies, results and ideas – the so called new media will be the opportunity for the young generation as growing up with new technologies) and last but not least maybe thanks to the general economic depression in the aspect as an eye opener. For Family Medicine this could be seen as a chance, as governments can't afford exclusive expensive special treatments with uncontrolled free access and for free any longer.

More personalized care will become a new trend, more focusing on the individual patient treatment, which can only be guaranteed by the GP himself, who is the only doctor knowing the entire patient.

All this will be part of the new generation of family doctors, becoming one of the most important specialities, caring of the entire patient and not only the patients, but forming health systems.

All my best wishes for the new generation. Looking back for 10 years, seeing where we stay now, nothing is impossible for the future.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Zuzana Švadlenková
Pre-conference, Prague 2013

Living in Prague, working as a GP since 2008, as an external lector of the Institute of GP 1st Faculty of Medicine Charles University, member of Czech Young GP's (executive group), Czech Republic VdGM representative since 2011 (member of executive group since 2012, Pre-conference Manager in 2013, liaison for education and training since 2013).

A few years, when Katka Javorská (our first Czech Republic VdGM representative) offered me to take over her position, I had no idea how much was this decision going to change my future. She explained to me the purpose, structure and scope of VdGM activities. My first encounter with the work of VdGM European Council was very confusing, but I could already sense the strength it all.



I found out that despite the fact that all beginnings are not easy, nobody can question the significance of the founding members. They did an amazing job leading the progression the right way, connecting European Young GPs, giving us a chance to share information, solutions to many problems (practice, medicine, personal), visions for our (not only) professional future, showing to the whole WONCA family how important our cooperation is.

Thanks to all the things that happened to me in the last few years (including the preparation of WONCA Prague 2013 Pre-conference and Conference, having the chance to take part in Hippocrates exchange, being part of the Executive Group, etc.), VdGM gave me the chance to grow up into a more experienced European GP.

It is not easy to be a GP, but it's totally worth it. I hope that the new generation will fully use all the new technologies and knowledge based on a deep respect for the roots of the family medicine, to improve not only professional lives (including leadership and management in their practices) but also the cooperation with all the patients. We should never forget that the most important part of our work is the holistic view of the surrounding world.

I also hope that the credit of our specialization will keep on rising (as it does now) and that the VdGM spirit will stay as strong as it is. We have to fight for our rights both locally and globally. We have started in Europe, spreading now our influence and experience even beyond. Hope not to lose our direction. Bon voyage, VdGM and good luck!



DENMARK

Mads Dannesbo

I am a danish GP trainee, just started on my specialization this year after graduating in 2010. It is quite usual in Denmark to work a while before choosing specialisation under the device that it is good to have the experience to choose the speciality that makes you whistle when you go to work. I have found just that in Family Medicine and I am looking forward for an inspiring trainee-period.

I have come to learn the people in VdGM to be a progressive bunch of people, who has a burning desire to do Family Medicine, to develop it and willing to do a lot of work to make a huge international Family Medicine forum for their countries members. VdGM is still growing and I reckon that the organisation will establish itself further with forum meetings, workgroups and hopefully EU-funded Hippokrates exchange programs in many countries. And also use the build up experience and energy to contribute to WONCA in the future. Otherwise all is open which is a beautiful thing.

I wish for the future of primary care that both low- and high-income countries can benefit from a strong primary care worldwide, delivered by doctors who have received formal training and specialization. That we can work together to find the balance between high quality of care and preventing unnecessary box-ticking and control, to keep a holistic approach in the doctor-patient relationship and use our skills for treatment and care. To continuously develop and discuss primary care in the future openly and once in a while with closed fists.



FRANCE

Andrea Poppelier

President of VdGM 2009-2011

Pre-conference, Paris 2007

Pre-conference Manager for WONCA

World in Cancun (2010)

I've been part of VdGM since I was a participant in the VdGM Pre-conference in Paris. The year after I was the french representative in Europe Council and elected in the Executive Board, during the Pre-conference in Istanbul. I have been president of VdGM from 2009 till 2011.

At this moment, I'm working as a GP in the southwest of France, and receiving as a trainer GP-trainees in my practice. I have three beautiful girls I like to spend my free time with.

It is great to see how VdGM has grown over the last decade: from a small structure launched in Amsterdam, up till a network for the future and young General Practitioners in Europe and in times to come, being one of the worldwide movements for young GPs.

During my activity within VdGM, I have had the privilege of preparing the first world wide Pre-conference in Cancun, prior to the World WONCA Conference. It was a great experience.... Having contact with young GPs from all over the world, getting aware of their training, their difficulties. Sharing experiences and learn from each other was the key message from this meeting, as with most of VdGM meetings.

During this meeting in Cancun, it was officially launched the Movimiento Waynakay, the South American counterpart of Vasco da Gama Movement. It was thrilling to see the arrival of this newborn! I hope in the future this liaison between GP trainees from all over the world will get even stronger.

I also have a great memory of the conference in Malaga, where my newborn girl Julie was the youngest participant ever (three weeks old...). On the picture she is hidden behind the VdGM flag..

Over the years, some topics have re-appeared in discussions between trainees: the lack of acknowledgement for general practice and family medicine, leading to a lack of interest amongst medical students to choose general practice as a professional career.

During some discussions we concluded it was necessary to have a peek of general practice during medical school, in order to know what a great job it is to take care of patients in an individual manner, with the complexity of all their health problems and personality together.

If I could make a wish for the future of general practice, I would ask for a new balance in medical school. About 50% of all physicians are working outside of a hospital, and even more outside of a university hospital. Having more practical training outside of these structures would be a benefit for general practice as a profession, but also for medical students.



Chloé Perdrix

I'm a french GP resident finishing my third year. I used to be the international relationship responsible of the french GP residents' union, and recently became the french National Exchange Coordinator in Vasco da Gama Movement.

The creation of VdGM has been the beginning of a big adventure, thanks to courageous and reckless young GPs who wanted to develop Family Medicine and unite young GPs in Europe. Today, for example, they succeeded in raising young GPs' voice to the WONCA council. Consequently, young GPs are able to submit directly their ideas to high instances! Moreover, exchanges are more and more numerous, and other fields are developing like violence toward women, research, rural medicine...

The first time I heard about VdGM was when I was in the annual French conference for GP residents organized by the union I belong. I wanted to travel during my studies, and I saw a presentation of the Hippocrates exchanges. Then, I became the french international relationships responsible. I had to communicate to residents about all VdGM activities, and about conference exchanges. The next one was in Palma de Mallorca, in September 2013. I came... What a lovely surprise this experience was!!! Meeting GP residents from all over Europe, motivated, competent, curious, and who all wanted the best for Family Medicine. They made me understand that Family Medicine could help to get the world better!!! I was in my element!

In October, the previous french NEC, Karina Heleniak, called me. She left her place after three years in VdGM. She proposed me to take the job! It was a little bit scary at the beginning... but remembering the conference exchange, and to imagine helping the organization to develop, helped me. I said Yes!

My most recent experience with VdGM was the conference exchange and the first forum at Barcelona in February 2014. What an amazing experience again!! I wish every European GP resident could experience that! I wish for the next 10 years of Family Medicine and young doctors being a motor in improving health in the world.

To resume, VdGM made me discover a beautiful European family. I know now that our specialty is likely to become more and more interesting and considered thanks to our generation that VdGM represents very well.

All the best for the future of VdGM, and never forget the past ☺



GERMANY

Solveig Carmienke

After graduating from Leipzig University Medical School in 2009, I started my training in general practice in a structured training program lead by the Department of General Practice (GP), Jena University Hospital, Germany. Doing research in GP became a key interest of mine. I discovered the VdGM through my volunteer work at the Junge Allgemeinmedizin Deutschland (JADE; Association of Young General Practice), the German filiae organisation of VdGM, in the JADE working groups “research and teaching in GP” and “international affairs”. Since 09/2013, I have been working as National Exchange Coordinator for the VdGM’s Hippokrates Exchange Program.

Since I am a comparatively new member of VdGM, I will focus on my present perspective of the VdGM. To me, the VdGM is a very inspiring movement. Meeting international young and future GPs really broadened my mind for different approaches in daily patient care. I gained new ideas which influenced my personal clinical care routine and met people which inspired me with their ideas of how to structure a GP practice. Particularly the exchange programs – Hippokrates Exchanges, Pre-conference exchanges and FM 360° – are corner stones to me of the VdGM. But VdGM Movement is more than just “exchange” – it is a platform for participation, discussion and networking.

My wishes for the next 10 years of young and future GPs, are that VdGM will keep on to perform exchange projects in order to create a further vital and ongoing international primary care community and innovation transfer. I hope, that more and more colleagues participate and maybe one day, this may be a regular part of the traineeship.

I could further imagine that VdGM establishes a platform for young researchers in primary care. A network of young researchers in primary care could strengthen building research capacities, increase cooperation and facilitate research in primary care in the participating countries. This may lead to a stronger position of primary care in the participating member countries. The first VdGM Forum this spring and implementation of the Young Researcher Award were excellent steps in this direction. Maybe they could be complemented by virtual contact platforms and research exchange rotations.

Which skills are needed to be a good GP in the next ten years and how could I train them? How should the future GP practice be organized to ensure a good patient care under consideration of work life balance and longer life time working periods? How should future

GPs deal with the balance between evidence-based medicine and individual patient needs? These may be other important issues to be discussed at the VdGM platform. Maybe this leads to the development of an international comparable “common trunk skills training concept” for training programs in General Practice – with respect to national differences and needs of member states.



Tobias Freund, MD

10 years of Vasco da Gama Movement – Opening up to the world!

I am a 4th year GP trainee from Germany working part time in academic family medicine besides my clinical training at the University Hospital of Heidelberg. Since 2013, I am the German delegate at the VdGM Europe Council and member of the executive board as the secretary of VdGM.

In 2007, I got in contact with VdGM for the first time at the WONCA Europe Conference in Paris. I was still a medical student, interested in family medicine and overwhelmed by attending my first international conference. At this time, VdGM was new to me but after joining the Research Theme Group Meeting I realized that I am already part of it! Since then, I had a great time meeting colleagues and friends sharing the same interests and visions. As part of our vision, we aim to promote science in Family Medicine and were therefore proud to be able to announce the first VdGM Junior Researcher Award in 2011! In addition to that, we run a series of workshops about research in Family Medicine together with EGPRN during the WONCA Conference that started with “How to find a research question?” and ended with “How to publish your research?”.

Although open for all from the very beginning, from the perspective of people not well informed about VdGM, it often appeared to be exclusively open to “delegates” as Pre-conferences used to be restricted to national delegates in the first years. I was more than happy to experience that VdGM opened its doors to “non-delegates” during the Pre-conferences! And even better: the idea of VdGM spread across the world and inspired the foundation of junior associations in the Asian/Pacific region, South Asia region, Iberoamericana region and Africa!

But what are the next steps? To me, sharing the vision of accessible and high quality family medicine in Europe and all over the world will be essential for the future of our specialty. And moreover: we need science in the field of Family Medicine! Therefore, I wish that VdGM will further promote research among new and establishing family doctors in Europe and even beyond Europe. The Junior Researcher Award is one first step, but we will need more steps including collaborative research projects, mentoring programs (“catch-a-senior”) and many more.



GREECE

Evangelos Fragkoulis, MD, MSc

I am a GP/FP working in private practice in Athens, Greece. I was appointed National Delegate of Greece to the VdGM Europe Council since 2014 and I was elected General Secretary of the Greek Union of General Practitioners, the professional body of Greek GPs. I hold an MSc in Health Services Management.

The economic crisis hit Greece more severely than in any other European country, posing a direct threat to health, but also offering the Greek health system a ‘questionable’ advantage – an opportunity to redesign the whole approach to healthcare.

I am really happy that Greece just one month ago, has launched a new primary health care law, based on the core values of the Declaration of Alma-Ata, to ensure better health of the Greek people. The health system reform targets to build a comprehensive and strong nation-wide primary health care service based on the institution of the family doctor. A dream for more than three decades for the Greek GPs eventually is coming true.

I first encountered VdGM in the 2013 Pre-conference in Prague, and I was so fascinated by the high spirit of its members, their passion for General Practice, and also the chance to communicate and exchange experiences and ideas with colleagues around the world, that soon I've found myself to want to be part of this family. In the 1st European Forum I was already National Delegate of Greece, aiming to flare up the interest for VdGM in my country. VdGM although born in Lisbon, formally launched at the WONCA Europe Conference 2005 in the Greek island Kos, the birthplace of Hippocrates. Since its beginning, VdGM managed to accomplish its main aim: to promote the discipline of GP/FM throughout Europe. A communication network between European trainees and young GPs is established. Their interaction helps to widen their perspective of the concepts of GP/FM. GPs from countries with weak Primary Care orientation, like Greece, learn a lot from GPs from countries with strong Primary Care. On the other hand, besides the significant differences found in GP/FM throughout Europe, young GPs realize that they have many things in common (concerns, doubts, needs, etc). Their interactions help them to address these issues.

A challenge for the future is the harmonization of the GP/FM across Europe, regarding the education/training scheme, the practice, the role of the GP in the health system, the research, etc. VdGM can play a critical role in this rough path towards “one” GP/FM by assisting to the identification of the differences and the similarities among the Primary Care systems of the European countries and by promoting the unification process. Another challenge for VdGM is to strive for the excellence in GP education and training, developing GPs that could meet the demand to deal with the complexity of the multimorbidity and ageing populations.



Lenia Chovarda

GP in NHS in Northern Greece for the past four years, M.Sc. in Health Care Administration, Educational Co-Ordinator for GP trainees
VdGM Greek Representative 2009-2013
VdGM Executive Board Research Liason Person 2009-2011

I first got involved with VdGM as part of a mini-exchange in Holland in 2007. The Greek VdGM representative was trying to recruit young ambitious doctors, curious to find out what was happening throughout Europe, keen to learn, ready to share experiences...

It was the first time I was hearing about this movement that gave a step just to Junior Doctors, so I took the opportunity and got involved in an amazing journey that lasted for 5 years!

In 2009 I took part in another exchange program, this time in Glasgow... I was amazed from the spirit of VdGM members to promote the basic principles of VdGM - collaboration, personalized education and care, exchange people and ideas. It was fascinating to meet colleagues who were GP trainees and junior GPs from all over Europe, and who lived and worked in countries with very distinct health systems, resources, research capacities, and working and training conditions. In this exchange, I realized that I wanted to be more involved, so my National Organisation made me the honor of appointing me as a National Representative.

In 2010 I was elected in the VdGM Executive Group in order to organize the first Junior Researcher Award that would be given the following year in Warsaw. A lot of work, with great friends and a sense of pride that I would be an active part of something so great. In 2011 the preparation for the second JRA followed...

I wish the next decade to find VdGM even more active. The opening to the social media network and the expansion to the other continents of the world with similar organisations (like The Rajakumar Movement for Asia Pacific region, the Spice Route for South Asia, the Waynakay for IberoAmerica, AfriWon for Africa and Al Razi Movement for East Mediterranean region) has provided new dynamics and opportunities for junior doctors. The Hippokrates Exchange Program is a great example of that and it would be even more powerful if it could be recognized from every participating country as educational time. The new generation of family doctors should be able to share a common but YET individualized/personalized education in order to work in every part of the world without borders....

I will be following closely since "once a VdGM, always a VdGM!"



IRELAND

Peter A Sloane

I am a General Practitioner working near Galway in the West of Ireland. I grew up in Belfast and trained as a doctor in Galway before undertaking vocational training in General Practice also in the West of Ireland. As well as working in clinical practice I am also involved in the Irish College of General Practitioners (the body for quality, standards and education in General Practice in Ireland) where I look after the needs of establishing General Practitioners. My role in the ICGP led to me becoming involved in the Vasco da Gama Movement.

I first became vaguely aware of the VdGM when I was a GP Trainee but I didn't really know much except that it was a loose network of young European GPs. My first real experience was at WONCA World in Prague in June 2013. I discovered at first hand the invigorating experience of meeting other young GPs from around Europe, exchanging ideas, and understanding how General Practice works in different countries. This led to attending the first VdGM Forum in Barcelona, another wonderful intercultural medical experience. I had the privilege of meeting Per Kallestrup, father of the Hippokrates Exchange Programme, and in particular telling him that we in Ireland have finally become a participating host country. Along the way on my VdGM journey I've not only had really great experiences, had my eyes opened and horizons expanded, met some wonderful GPs, but I've also made lots of new European friends.

Looking to the future of VdGM, I hope very much that it supports the development in all European countries of proper General Practice training pathways, the emergence of structured formal and funded support organisations for establishing GPs, and that it continues to grow opportunities for pan European and international exchange programmes. The growth in social media will be interesting to watch within the medical field and I hope VdGM continues to be at the forefront of this new paradigm in communications. I also hope that VdGM can act as a strong voice and advocator for a rebalancing of our health services towards increasingly local provision in general practice of cost effective, personalised acute and chronic disease management with a shift of resources from hospitals into the community.

Perhaps more than this, I hope VdGM continues to be the friendly, invigorating, motivating, enthusiastic and passionate organisation that has been my experience.

ISRAEL

Ronen Brand

I'm a 4th year trainee in the Department of Family Medicine of Clalit Health Maintenance in Haifa and Western Galilee district, Israel. I live in a village in the Western Galilee, and have wonderful two kids. I graduated medical school (Technion, Haifa) on 2002 and have been serving as a doctor in the Israeli army for several years before starting my residency. I'm engaged in several research projects held in my department, and lately, I've started learning for a master degree in epidemiology at Haifa's University.

On July 2012, I had the honor to participate, for the first time, in WONCA Europe Conference, held in Vienna. Something had caught my eyes with the buzz around Vasco da Gama Movement stand in the lobby. Young residents and FPs from different countries were sharing ideas, difficulties and hopes, and I immediately drawn to it. As I really wanted to take part in promoting Family Medicine in my country, I thought there was nothing I could do better than join VdGM, and represent Israel in the European Council and working groups. With a little back wind from my head of department, Prof. Khaled Karkabi, and with the blessing of the Israeli Association of Family Physicians executive committee, I became the first official Israeli VdGM representative.

Taking home to Israel this huge responsibility, I thought that this was the opportunity to establish a working movement of residents and young FPs that could promote issues within Family Medicine in Israel and cooperate with colleagues in Europe, learning from their experience and vice versa.

Since Israel has a representative in VdGM, our residents and young FPs had the wonderful opportunity to join numerous exchange programs throughout Europe. Several trainees from Europe have completed a full Hippocrates Exchange in one of 13 host clinics we established. In fact, two trainees are in the course of Hippocrates Exchange while I'm writing these lines. Last week, I had the great honor to host 28 trainees and young FPs from 15 countries during the first mini-exchange program in Israel.

I surely hope that the activity of VdGM in Israel will continue and even grow to new directions, facilitating the development of our profession, giving the young generation its right place in influencing on our future.

I really wish that VdGM activity will spread throughout Europe and will be the home of all trainees and young FPs in the continent. Together, I hope we will be able to make our mark on building the future of primary healthcare. I wish research cooperation will emerge, using VdGM as a platform. Research in Family Practice is a field needed to be taken a step forward, and I think VdGM can be the one to do it. I also wish that VdGM activities for exchange in Family Practice will continue to expand, serving as a model for other movements, enabling us to exchange ideas, experiences and opening our minds. I really hope to continue being a part of VdGM and contribute to our common future.





ITALY

Andrea Moser

Pre-conference, Florence 2006

I'm a 39 years old GP licensed in 2004 in Italy. I went to Barcelona in 2003 throughout Hippocrates Program and I have been a "host doctor" in the programme for three colleagues from UK and Spain. Actually I work in Trento (110000 inhabitants). I'm a CSeRMEG's board member.

Some memories of the Pre-conference in Italy (2006).

In January 2006, guest of the Royal College of General Practitioner in London, I met for the first time the "new-born" Vasco da Gama Movement's crew.

One of the meeting goal was to start the of the Vasco da Gama Pre-conference organisation at Wonca Congress in Florence - 2006.

It was the first Pre-conference for VdGM, so there was no experience on it; thanks to a many people great effort, particularly of the Pre-conference manager João Carlos Sequeira and of the Wonca-Firenze's liaison person Giorgio Visentin, the meeting organisation was really great and stimulating.

At that time in Italy there was'nt a "young s GP Network" and the recruitment of the Italian doctors was not really easy. So that through the effective interest of the School of Vocational Training of Trento's director (dr.Valcanover), we was able to keep in contact with many trainees and young GP from all part of Italy and at the end of all the participation at the meeting was enthusiastic and the first VdGM Pre-conference was successfully played.

From that experience and thanks to the Vasco da Gama stimulation, we was also able to found, in 2007, the Giotto Movement, the Italian Organisation for young and future General Practitioners.

I hope that VdGM will continue promote the culture and the contents of General Practice spread to young doctors throughout all Europe.

Rosa Avino

Italian National Exchange Coordinator

I'm an Italian Family Doctor. I joined the great and enthusiastic Vasco da Gama Movement's "Family" in summer 2012. I started collaborating with the exchange group as the Italian National Coordinator for the Hippocrates Programme, after I've personally experienced the exchange programme in the UK. At that time, I was a GP trainee in the second year of my vocational training. I entered this new "World" on tiptoe observing and learning from Colleagues with such a great experience in their Countries and abroad. What surprised me a lot, was they had a valuable talent to involve people from all around Europe and beyond with humility and open-mindedness. First, I met Sara Rigon and Harris Lygidakis, both living in Italy at that time (I was so lucky!). They made me feel always really welcome as a Colleague and now as a Friend and it was so inspiring for me, professionally and personally. I joined the RCGP Conference and VdGM Pre-conference in Glasgow in 2012: like the first step in a new "direction". It was so easy to meet new people from different Countries, to spend time sharing opinions on medical topics but also on cultural ones.

WONCA World Conference and VdGM Pre-conference in Prague in summer 2013 was my second "taste" and after that the message was clear: Colleagues all around the World were so proud to be Family Doctors. It was amazing and I felt a little stunned at the same time.



Once back in Italy, what I was feeling urgent was to let the message pass to most of the Italian Colleagues, inviting them to join the team and to share their daily experiences and challenges. “Think globally and act locally”: I’ve heard and read this expression many times and It was more easy to do, that I could ever imagine. During the last Croatian Conference and the first VdGM Forum in Barcelona there was a large participation of Colleagues from my country.

As a new Family Doctor, I really hope to keep this energy unchanged over the time and to continue to stay involved in the VdGM team such as in the future of Primary Care. Present and future generations of Family Doctors will be challenge with medical and cultural issues concerning health care in the next years in a more and more complex Society. What I really want to keep in mind is that I am a small, but unique, part of a wider framework and every time I will attend one of this Conference, meeting Colleagues from abroad, sharing opinions and doubts, keeping my medical knowledge up to date, I will have also the opportunity to see that “big picture” from a distance. This would help me to think over what I am used to do in the everyday life as a doctor such as a person, to improve and change myself if needed.



Sara Rigon

I’m an Italian Junior GP form Bologna, Italy. After finishing GP training, I moved to the Dolomite to work as an A&E tourist doctor and undertook a post graduate course in emergency medicine. In 2011, I was appointed VdGM Exchange coordinator and I started working as a locum GP in my hometown. Last year, I moved to New Zealand to work in a A&E – GP practice.

Four years in the Vasco da Gama Movement and I learned: 1. Europe is not a concept, 2. anything is possible, 3. it is all about the team.

I like to think of VdGM as a truly global organisation of European GP trainees and Junior GPs who share the same passion and enthusiasm for Primary Care. Supported by Wonca Europe, VdGM inspires many colleagues across Europe and challenges all of us to fight for better educational programmes as well as health care systems.

It has always been so, since the very beginning when VdGM was still merely an idea in Amsterdam in 2004. Ten years later, VdGM is a reality and it has not forgotten its past. On the contrary, the present of the movement is a constant recognition to former members, their work is reflected in every Junior Research and Exchange awards, in every Hippokrates Exchange, in every VdGM bursary. The future of the movement is a dream, as it has always been for its brilliantly talented members who can make the impossible possible. The future is the 2nd VdGM Forum in 2015, the 20th anniversary in 2024.

Personally, the Vasco da Gama Movement changed my life, literally. I joined VdGM in 2009 as a delegate at the 6th annual VdGM Pre-conference, those 2 days in Basel shaped my life as it is today. Most of the colleagues I met through the years have grown to be some of my dearest and truest friends, my chosen family.

I’m extremely grateful I had the chance to be part of this, it has been a transformative experience that gifted me with knowledge, compassion wisdom, professional development and friends.

For the next 10 years, I wish VdGM to keep dreaming, expanding its vision of a European collective wisdom and holistic approach on primary care and to continue remind us what it means to be a GP and that we are all connected, all part of the same community, Europe.



LĀTVIA

Maija Kozlovskā

Member of Family Violence Working Party in Beyond Europe Group of VdGM [Since 2013]

Family Physician [Since 2013]

Member of Working Party of Patients' Safety and Quality-Equip-VdGM Working Party in Beyond Europe Group of VdGM and EURIPA [Since 2012]

National representative of Latvia in VdGM in Europe Council [Since 2012 October]

Medical doctor's degree [Since 2010]

Since the establishment, Vasco da Gama Movement has done a brilliant work, reaching countries over the seas, deserts and oceans to unite and help establishing and future Family Physicians.

A lot of nations dream of a stable and effective health care. Till now, none of the states have declared having reached complete prosperity and well-being. Primary health care is the foundation in patients' health care, and mixed Capitation model of funding is the best That we have for now [Many thanks to Barbara Starfield for seeding the roots of development of primary health care worldwide]. And still I believe, we can reach more. These data claim for having such the organisation to gather young primary health care specialists for finding better ways of solutions for these and other issues.

It has been a blessing for me to be the National Representative of Vasco da Gama Movement of Latvia. We are a small, but proud country, and it has been such a pleasure to help establishing Family Physicians see the world and the other side of the coin of health care, taught by their own experiences. This work takes a lot of free time, however, the feedback I receive from my colleagues is worth thousand times more. I wish Vasco da Gama Movement spreads its wings worldwide, so every Family Physician, who feels neglected, may taste from the Cup of wonders and development, it provides! May next 10 years Family Physicians of all nations unite in the net of collaboration and no one is left behind!



NETHERLANDS

Persijn Honkoop

I am a GP in the Netherlands. Currently, I work for two to three days in different General Practices as a locum. Additionally I am doing a PhD on the treatment of asthma in Primary Care.

To me, the Vasco Da Gama Movement is all about being a network for young GP's from all over Europe. Ever since it was 'born', all its members have had one characteristic in common, which is great enthusiasm! It is absolutely fantastic to meet GP's from all over Europe and beyond and hear them talk with great passion about their every day work and the special patients they encounter and the special circumstances in which they perform their job. It is also good to see how the most important aspect of being a GP, caring for patients (in all stages and phases of life), is shared all over the world. And on the other hand it is also really great to have discussions with people over all the small differences that exist between countries. These differences make you reflect on the situation in your own country, what is good and what is not, and you start thinking how your system could be improved. This reflection is the beginning for people to start making a change!

So for the next 10 years, I wish VdGM to continue the great work, be a place where we meet, and where we share experiences and ideas, and where we discuss how to improve things. I wish VdGM to explore new ways of communication, VdGM should embrace innovations instead of being afraid of them. Let us be the promoters of the use of Facebook, Skype and Twitter as a GP! I wish VdGM to embrace Evidence Based Medicine, advocate its use and to teach scepticism towards sponsored trials, so we refrain from prescribing unnecessary medication. But above all I wish VdGM to remain a community where people will have a good time, where we care about being a GP and all it entails, and where we will be proud of our profession, and of course I wish us to be enthusiastic!!

PORTUGAL

Ana Margarida Cruz

Young family doctor (on her third year after concluding the residency)
Member of the European Council of VdGM (2010-2013), collaborator of education and training (2009-2013), treasurer of the executive (2013), liaison to IPCRG (2013)
Member of the APMGF board (Portuguese Association of Family Doctors)
Member of the APGB board (Balint Portuguese Association)

In 10 years, VdGM has gained a very special place in Family Medicine, not only in Europe but as an example across the world. Similar movements have been created all around the globe, tightening the bond between family doctors.

In Portugal, we had a new forum, “MGFXXI”, which counted on thousands of participants, and was one of the first online platforms created with the main goal of gathering ideas and experiences across the country. Since 2001, we have had a congress for trainees and young family doctors, integrated in a national congress.

In Europe, young family doctor associations have also been created. This year, we had our first forum in Barcelona, and in the future, we expect to maintain this “VdGM family” as creative and eager to make a difference.



I took part in the Pre-conference in Basel, in 2009, which was my first contact with VdGM. At the time, I was just amazed at how easy it was to know other realities, exchange experiences and I was especially interested in collaborating with education and training. Some of us collaborated in a study aimed at evaluating our satisfaction with our training. Portugal was one of the eight participating countries.

Every participation at a Pre-conference was a new boost, with new projects and ideas. I felt really motivated and I expected to share this experience with my colleagues at a national level. In 2010, I organized a special session for trainees and young family doctors in our national congress, and it was amazing how much we needed to share our thoughts and projects for family medicine for the next ten years. It was obvious that we wanted the best for our patients, our family and family medicine. It is just so important to give young family doctors and trainees a voice! We may have different opinions, but once we gain enthusiasm, “the sky is the limit”.

I strongly believe that we still have a long way to go as far as the definition of Family Medicine is concerned across Europe. The exchanges, the meetings and this ease in communicating will give us leads on how we can improve primary care. There are still some countries that are most welcome to join us and, together, we can get a stronger voice, to achieve improvements in training and family medicine.

“Think globally, act locally” is one of the main mottos of this movement. Every VdGM participant knows that, besides his/her personal experience, he/she must share it and encourage others to get to know this great opportunity. In the next 10 years, I expect a new generation of family doctors, focused on a better care for patients – the best way of putting into practice all the work we have been undertaking.

Tânia Colaço
Family Doctor

Born in Lisbon on March 13th 1981. Graduated from the Faculty of Medicine of University of Porto (Portugal) in 2004. Family Medicine trainee (2007-2010) at USF Horizonte, Matosinhos (Portugal). Visitor Family Doctor (2011) at Victoria Community Health Centre, Victoria (Canada). Presently, Family Doctor at USF Porta do Sol, Leça do Balio (Portugal).

I first contacted with the VdGM at the Pre-conference in Paris 2007 and immediately following I joined the research theme group. I was later the Portuguese member at the European Council (EC) between 2008 and 2009 (informal EC Lisbon 2008, Pre-conference Istanbul 2008, informal EC Nice 2009, Pre-conference Basel 2009).

As a VdGM member, I was mainly involved in the planning/first steps of the Junior Researcher Award, the organisation of VdGM workshops at the WONCA conferences, the development of the VdGM webpage and the revival of the Hippokrates Programme, amongst other ongoing activities at the time. It is a pleasure to see that after five years, several projects and dreams have become reality and that new ideas were born and have flourished.



VdGM has a great potential to give GP/FM and trainees/young doctors a special place to discuss, plan and grow as professionals. I wish the next 10 years to be ones of consolidation, with more countries to join in and participate actively. Networking is the key to deal with innovation and knowledge management these days. Also, I hope the future can keep the focus on stimulating/creating shared resources that can help facing the challenges of personalized and comprehensive care in Family Medicine.



ROMANIA

Raluca Zoitanu

Family Doctor in Bucharest, Romania since 2013, where I also did my medical studies. Currently VdGM Europe Council & Executive Group member. Founder of the Romanian Junior GP network as a group inside the Romanian Society of Family Medicine (2011).

My first encounter with VdGM has been in 2011 when I've met Spain's and UK's representatives in two conferences, following their presentations of VdGM. Another introduction was by two WONCA presidents who visited my country that year and spoke very fondly about VdGM and its members. But these encounters didn't prepare me enough for the huge surprise of attending my first Pre-conference later that year in Warsaw! It seemed like a dream to meet so many like-minded colleagues, so enthusiastic and passionate about family medicine. I enjoyed and was surprised by all the discussions about health systems around Europe, to find out similarities I would never expect and



differences from which I could learn a lot. And everyone was so friendly, like in a big happy family! Following this experience and using the expertise gained, I decided to create a Romanian network for new and future family doctors. It grew slowly but now, almost three years on, I am happy to see everything we've achieved.

When opportunity came the next year at VdGM's Europe Council meeting, I said yes! to becoming a member of the great Executive team, to help VdGM continue its work and to grow. As the Image Group liaison, I'm having the very enjoyable task of working with a very creative team to find new ways to promote VdGM and family medicine – from t-shirts to social media and videos. Each new opportunity to meet other members of VdGM is a moment of happiness and a source of great memories.

On its 10th anniversary, I think it is safe to say that VdGM is the best support network for European new and future GPs/FPs and a good model for other regions. Probably even for other medical specialities.

VdGM has grown year after year, with new projects emerging and previous ones becoming better each year, with new links to other networks and organisations. The present is exciting and there is no doubt in my mind that my imagination can not do justice to what future members will create inside VdGM.

I feel and hope that VdGM will continue to be in the next 10 years a strong voice and a leading voice for new and future family doctors. Helping them navigate through the often stormy waters of the first years of the career, by offering perspective and a good support network. I know it will also continue to lead the way, among family medicine organisations, in the area of the use of new technologies in primary care and the use of social media. And I hope VdGM will continue to assist us in becoming better doctors for our patients, through all its projects and the enthusiasm it brings out in us. I know it has helped me so far!



SERBIA

Ljiljana Baloš, Estera Vidaković, Natalija Jovanović, Tanja Aleksić

We are all GP/FM from Serbia working at different Health Centers. All of us and more are active in VdGM in Serbia. Dr Ljiljana Baloš works with children aged 3–19 as Family Physician at the International School of Belgrade, Dr Estera Vidaković is working as a GP/FM with a student population at the Student Polyclinic Belgrade, Dr Natalija Jovanović is working with adult population as a GP/FM at the Health Center in Šabac, town near and Dr Tanja Aleksić is working with adult population as a GP/FM at the Health Center in Pančevo, a town near Belgrade.

We think that the VdGM's has gave a great value to the GP/FM profession, through a GP/FM communication and integration, which is precious at all levels, national and internationally. Family Physicians can collaborate through a professional exchange as well as collaborate on different topic issues, through researches at different levels which shows that integration process goes towards greater idea of Global Health communication.

The exchange of knowledge based facts through different GP/FM practices is changing the quality of Primary Health care. By promotion of VdGM the idea of such Global Health integration goes beyond borders. Research based statistics, exchange in professional data leads to better development of practice standards at each country at primary health care. This is great opportunity to a young GP/FM to overview different approaches to different practices.

The quality in practice is expanding its standards across the countries on evidence based medical facts gained through different collaborative researches.





SLOVENIA

Nina Kafel Jere

**VdGM Slovenia (Mladi Zdravniki Družinske Medicine)
Exchange Coordinator**

In 2005, I completed six years of medicine studies at the Faculty of Medicine Ljubljana. In 2008, I began with GP training and 5 years after I successfully finished it. I have been interested in health care of foreign countries already in my student days. In 2009, I attended a short exchange programme for GP trainees in Glasgow, Scotland. I was impressed by the young active members of VdGM. In the same year, I accepted the role of VdGM Exchange Coordinator for Slovenia. In 2012 we successfully completed the first mobility project with partners in the UK.

The VdGM team is in Slovenia hiding under the name of Young Doctors of Family Medicine (Mladi Zdravniki Družinske Medicine). Young physicians are in Slovenia actively engaged and we are officially part of the Slovene Family Medicine Society. Every year we organise a professional meeting for family doctors (Kokaljevi Dnevi) where we dedicate most of the time to the topics which are in interest of young doctors. We cooperate with the Department of Family Medicine, we participate in the current medical forums and warn the public and government about the problems of young doctors.

Slovenia has a long tradition of a good health system based on primary health care activities. Quality of care is an important issue in the debates in our country. We are working on the development of guidelines in several fields and on organisational changes. Academic and political position of family physicians in Slovenia is rather good. Family physicians are responsible for most of primary settings (we still have paediatricians, school medicine doctors and gynaecologists in the PHC). But most working GPs/family physicians are overloaded, their patient lists comprise of far more patients than CPME recommendations are. Mean consultation time is 7-10 minutes (from 0,5 to 150 min) and there is a long waiting time in the waiting room. Big problem is a shortage of all doctors, especially of GPs. A lot of work overload has been seen in recent times – the obligations have moved from secondary to the primary care.

For the future, I wish and expect more family doctors and more young doctors interested in family medicine, which means fewer patients per physician (until 1300 patients). I think it is necessary to redistribute more money to primary level and then that money should follow the patient, if he needs secondary care. The education (professional meetings, courses) of young doctors is very important and should be financially accessible to everyone and be of good quality.



SPAIN

Anna Maria Pedro Pijoan

**4th year junior doctor as family medicine doctor
National Exchange Coordinator for Spain**

In my 4th year of GP trainee, I had the great pleasure to be in contact with Vasco da Gama Movement. I had been attending their sessions in several congresses, with Sara de Olmo as presenter, with the aim to enable external rotations. Only until one year later, as junior doctor, I had the opportunity to meet Spanish members of VdGM in Poland WONCA's Conference and the huge family members of all around Europe. That's when I started to collaborate and being member of the Spanish Exchange Group.

Knowing this group, this movement, I stayed with them. The VdGM and the Exchange Group are like a little family: very dynamic, new GP trainees coming up and going, to participate, to work, to offer and to show the others what the Family Medicine speciality can offer. No barriers, no distance, at any hour as technology progress, GP trainees and junior doctors get to manage more and more. Technology, updating knowledge, all sharing new tools by networking, with the aim to be a better Family and Community Medicine's doctor.



Raquel Gómez Bravo

Born in from Alhaurín el Grande (Málaga), in 1979. Graduated from the Medical School of Malaga and Specialist of Family and Community Medicine (Madrid), Expert in Mental Health in Primary Care and Expert in Quality Management in Health Care. Member of the international section of SemFYC (Spanish Scientific Society of Family and

Community Medicine), Spanish Representative Member in VdGM Europe Council and Coordinator of its Beyond Europe Group since 2010 and part of the VdGM Executive.

VdGM started as an initiative with five countries 10 years ago, to provide a forum for GP trainees and junior doctors, support and information to promote family medicine and improve it. When the network was created in 2004, probably nobody could imagine the great evolution and its consolidation in the following ten years.

At present time, VdGM is one of the most successful network of WONCA, with five active theme groups and 32 participating countries. It is becoming more organized and popular, engaging colleagues in all its different projects and producing some high results. In the future, VdGM will continue working in many different project, in collaboration with more WONCA networks, engaging more countries and colleagues, consolidating the team and providing this contagious enthusiasm, energy and innovation like nowadays.

Since eight years ago, I am part of VdGM. I was recruiting colleagues, spreading the word of VdGM, working with EURIPA and becoming coordinator of Beyond Europe Group in 2010 and part of the Executive, leading this theme group and helping to create inside it different sub-groups in collaboration with others: EQuIP, WWPWFM, Family Violence, WWPRP and IFMSA, working in the strategy, leadership and organisation so other colleagues could take the role, developing and implementing the network.

At a national level, I have contributed to create the network, innovating, engaging new members, promoting workshops in all the congresses and conferences exchanges, taking part in all the VdGM projects and involving in them as many colleagues as possible. We also were lucky to organize the Pre-conference in Malaga in 2010, a big challenge for us which helped to consolidate the team. After that, I became the Spanish Representative and part of the Europe Council. Our last achievement was the organisation and hosting of the I VdGM Forum (February 2014) in Barcelona, with the participation of more than 210 colleagues and also the organisation of the Conference Exchange the previous days, with 33 colleagues participating from 17 different countries.

Innovation is the clue in GP/FM and Primary Care, and I wish that VdGM will increase its adaptability and creativity, networking as a team with all the professionals involved in





Primary Care, continuing building bridges of communication between them and all the countries around the world. We are in continuous change and we have to cooperate and participate in this evolution. VdGM will be the motor that leads this union, fighting for a better system.

It is essential and I wish that VdGM will be more involved to promote the patient-centred care, improving the communication and coordination with secondary care to provide longitudinality to our patients and better Primary Care. I hope that we could help other countries with some ongoing examples and use this evidence to improve the care in other places. It is time to go further and analyse our systems, being more involved, providing training and evidence to facilitate the ideal holistic approach of the GPs.

Knowledge management is a must to move from the evidence to the practice and I believe the next generation of VdGM members will use the intellectual capital to improve the system, the GP training and Primary Care and also be more efficient and effective. I strongly wish that GP trainees and junior GPs would join and coordinate their efforts to achieve this goal.

I believe the new generation of family doctors will be the continuity of all the previous generations, if we are able to transmit the knowledge and build together the present and the future, learning from each other. As in a family, the potential of all the GPs around the world unified and fighting for the same objectives, is enormous.

I hope we could take care of each other, senior to students, junior doctors to GP trainees, keeping the enthusiasm and the motivation, working and influencing all the stages, shoulder by shoulder, without differences, to become leaders in our daily practice, doing the best for our patients and working to improve and promote Primary Care around all the world.



SWITZERLAND

Franziska Morger

I am a 37 years young general practitioner in Switzerland, from Zurich, having started with my own practice in the beginning of January 2014. I finished my medical studies at the university of Zurich in 2004. Before starting my internship, I went for a long cycling trip from Kairo to Capetown. After seven years of training in different hospitals and practices in 2012, I did my exam to become a specialist of general medicine. I live with my partner and my son in a village close to Zurich.

I am very happy that there were enthusiastic people who found VdGM in 2004. In these times of globalisation it seems very important that also a GP who works very locally keeps in mind that there are other things out there. I wish that VdGM in 10 years will be known by every young GP in Switzerland and Europe!

I was the national coordinator for the Hippokrates Program from 2012 to 2014 for Switzerland. I am very happy that in this time we had about 10 exchanges taking place from young GPs from Europe visiting Switzerland. I think for all of them it was a great experience. GPs in Switzerland can do a lot of diagnostic in their practice (e.g. x-ray, laboratory, ultrasound, ECG, pulmonary function) – as far as I know, this is unique in Europe. We are also allowed to have a distinct pharmacy so we can give the medication directly to patients. Most of the participants stayed with their hosts and perceived this way an impression of the swiss culture. This experience was at least as important as the medical exchange. Unfortunately, only three swiss young GPs went abroad, two to Italy, one to the Netherlands. One of them was me, going to Trento in Italy. I had a fantastic time! It was so interesting to see how the same thing (being a GP) can be so differently organized. But of course the problems of the patients were the same!

I hope that VdGM, with Hippokrates, the Pre-conferences, the newly founded Forum and all its other projects can keep up with all the new GP trainees and young GPs coming after us and that the spirit of broad-mindedness and curiosity remains.



Sven Streit
President of VdGM 2011-2012
Pre-conference, Basel 2009

Born in Aarau, Switzerland, grown up in the countryside. Finished college in 2001 in Aarau, spent 1 year in military service. Study of Medicine 2002-2008, married 2009, two children (Matilda 2010, Timon 2013). Finished vocational training 2014. Actual position as a senior physician in general internal medicine at the department of general internal medicine at university hospital in Bern. Additionally doing research at the institute of general practice of the University of Bern. Having been active in improving training, research and perspective in VdGM as chair until 2012 and nationally at the VdGM Switzerland called JHaS since 2008 as chair.

My perspective about the VdGM's past appears as an enthusiastic group of „grown-ups“ with very good ideas how young GPs could be organized. Became my home during my active times and made me happy while helping evolve VdGM as chair. In the present, I accomplish the huge engagements of VdGM in national and international congresses worldwide. I wish VdGM a bright future where as many young GPs as possible can learn to get organized, inspired and taken to go back to their home country to continue improving family medicine.

VdGM members are young people in danger of a „bore out“ and therefore they are very very active, networking and brilliant persons. My experiences were very important in helping me finding my way in politics of family medicine. My own contributions focus on providing people an active platform where they can meet (Pre-conference), get inspired, and get engaged to improve family medicine. Since I'm swiss, my main contributions as VdGM chair were being on time in order to discuss all the topics we wanted to discuss (mainly too many!) and give everyone the occasion to express themselves. I'm happy VdGM is still getting bigger due to very enthusiastic persons.

For the next 10 years of GF/FM and trainees/young doctors, I wish us ... a research focusing more on patients in the setting of Primary Care where multimorbidity is not a reason to be excluded from studies but included!

... teaching students and residents the highly valuable elements of taking history and examination instead of computer scans and fancy labor testings.

Medicine is too complex to be understood by one person or one profession. However, we as GPs have to manage different diseases and their interferences. By knowing our patients over time (longitudinal) we manage to overcome difficulties in not knowing every detail or the last five publications in NEJM about sarcoidosis.

The next generation of family doctors is younger, more female, more capable of working, researching, networking, living and being parents due to the populations understanding that a good manager starts with good management of themselves.



TURKEY

Özgür Erdem, MD

President and Founding Member of Diyarbakir Association of Family Physicians.
Working as a family physician at Diyarbakir Kayapınar No. 9 Family Health Centre since 2010.

Became a family physician specialist in September, 2009.

Worked as a family physician assistant at Dicle University Medical Faculty between the years of 2006 and 2009.

Student at Dicle University Medical Faculty between 1995 and 2001.

Born in Mardin in 1977.

I consider that the core of VdGM have been seeded for junior doctors during the WONCA Europe conference in Amsterdam in 2004. Moreover this core has grown with love and affinity of junior doctors and of course their trainers. When I participated in WONCA EUROPE Pre-conference in Basel, 2009, I realized that all of my colleagues coming from different countries were by no doubt so happy. They all wanted to do something for VdGM become a big tree. Therefore I believe that VdGM's tree will have been the biggest one bearing useful and significant fruit in the near future.

I would rather become a family physician than any other specialist doctors. Furthermore, if I graduated from medical faculty now, I would definitely prefer to be a general practitioner again. Due to the fact that the more I know VdGM and participated in its organisation and activities; for example the exchange programs, the more I like my job.

VdGM is a unique experience. I hope in the future it will become an integral part of GP training as it inspires junior doctors to take an active part in the development of Family Medicine. Furthermore, it enhances collaboration between the national and of course international organisations of General Practice.

On account of that the world population is getting older, the primary healthcare should be prepared for it as well. Besides, the general practitioners must develop new care units for the primary care. Furthermore, trainees' education programs have to be renovated. New education methods are to be in use. Nowadays, when compared to the past, there

is much more network of telecommunications in different countries, however they need to be integrated into each other. Every family medicine doctor should be able to share its experiences, knowledge, interesting case report, patients and themselves in the near future across the countries.

It is my concern that in all of doctor populations' only family doctors, especially the members of VdGM, will be happy and enjoy from their professions thanks to the fantastic and significant organisations.



Zelal Akbayin

I work as a Family Medicine Specialist in Istanbul since 2006. I graduated from Ege University School of Medicine in Izmir, Turkey. I was a Representative of Vasco da Gama Movement (VdGM) of Turkey between 2009-2013.

My involvement with VdGM first started at WONCA Europe Congress in Paris in 2007. At the time, I was interested in the Hippokrates Exchange Programme and trying to find as much information as possible. I met Per Kallestrup, founder of the Hippokrates Exchange Programme, and meeting with Per was the start of my three year journey as the VdGM Representative of Turkey.

As a representative, I had the opportunity to meet doctors from many other countries and exchange ideas. The insight I gained on how family medicine works in other countries expanded my vision. In Turkey, GP Trainees did not have a committee. Being inspired from VdGM and its working structure, I and my friend Mustafa Ozunal founded the first Turkish Committee of Young GPs, which we call FAMILYA.

VdGM provides excellent opportunities for GPs and has an important role for the future of General Practice. I hope VdGM continues to inspire, motivate, and network GPs in creating new and innovative ideas and projects.



UNITED KINGDOM

Maria-Luisa M Pettigrew

Family Doctor, London, UK

Vasco da Gama Movement Council Member 2009-2011

My first experience of WONCA and the Vasco da Gama Movement (VdGM) was at the annual European Conference that took place in Istanbul in 2008, the same year I qualified as a family doctor. I remember the feeling of anticipation and excitement during the opening ceremony sitting next to thousands of family doctors from across the world, I had never seen so many in one place, and I wondered how much in common we could actually have. Over the course of the following days I learnt about differences in how family doctors were trained, just how differently health systems were structured, about



how healthcare was paid for across a number of countries, and in turn how this affected family doctors and their patients. The differences were significant and it raised many questions for me about why we did what we did, and how we could make it better. Yet despite the differences, I found we had much more in common as, wherever you worked, the challenges and rewards of caring for patients as a family doctor were surprisingly similar. VdGM gave me the opportunity during this conference to meet other young family doctors who had very similar hopes and aspirations to my own. This gave me a strong feeling of common purpose and inspired me to become more involved in VdGM; initially as a council member for the UK, then as the Exchange Lead for the Hippokratres Programme, and more recently as the WONCA-WHO liaison person for WONCA World.

The evidence we currently have indicates that health systems with stronger primary care have better health outcomes, are more equitable and probably more cost-effective. Primary Care achieves this through the delivery of comprehensive, continuous, coordinated person-centred care which is based in the community. However health and healthcare are changing rapidly, with increasing sub-specialisation of health professionals, rising multimorbidity and the advent of health related IT. Primary care needs to keep up to ensure it continues to deliver what makes it successful and it needs explore new innovative ways to do so. VdGM must play a fundamental role in this, as it holds the future of family medicine in Europe in its hands.

Getting involved in VdGM has been one of the most inspiring and enjoyable experiences in my career so far. It has given me opportunities to meet people and learn in a way that no other experience could have done. I cannot recommend it enough.

5. *Postface*



Harris Lygidakis

Family Doctor, Italy

President of the Vasco da Gama Movement

The times ahead of us are characterised by dramatic changes in the society, medicine and primary care. In this fast-paced world, Family Doctors need to assume more roles – more than before, while performing on the stage of the remarkably conservative medicine. As the workload and responsibilities become more and more overwhelming and our future seems clouded by the cold mist, we often just give up. We may even become victims of isolation.

Over the years, I have had the privilege to listen to the stories of colleagues from all over Europe and the concerns stemming from their experiences.

How can we serve our patients best and protect the underserved? How can we make a decent living? What are my skills, strengths and weaknesses? How can I improve, develop and extend my abilities further? What about time management, training, medical education, research, special interests, qualifications, assessments, career development, aspirations? How can I find a job? How can we enhance our image? What about ensuring equity and quality standards? How can we work in a context of economic struggle and limited resources? How can we work when there's lack of a clear vision and strategies for the future?

And how can we tackle all that, while continuing taking care of ourselves and our own families?

The problems may be diverse from context to context. However, a clear pattern emerges from them: the thirst for change.

Ten years ago, a team of junior Family Doctors, guided and supported by senior WONCA members, launched what soon would become our Vasco da Gama Movement. I strongly believe that our greatest endeavour ever is this very battle against isolation, which entails satisfying the need for belongingness through the development of a proper network, and empowering our members for broad-based action. It is really extraordinary how the

participants of our pre-conferences, exchanges and other initiatives, frequently forget any pre-planned meeting agenda and within ten minutes start discussing the issues, dreams and actions of theirs and their fellows.

Ultimately, the mission of all of us is to improve the health and well-being of our patients. It has become pivotal therefore, to start working differently and consider medicine as a team sport; all the stakeholders, including the patients, all the healthcare professionals and the administration, need to dismantle their communication and cultural silos and initiate a meaningful collaboration. Whether we, the Family Doctors, take the lead in resolving problems, become active members of a guiding coalition or contribute with our insights to a team, it is high time we began acting diversely, openly, creatively, and always respectfully.

In this anniversary book, different stories spring from our vastly heterogeneous continent. Yet, there are two notable common points that bond them strongly: a respectful look back at the beginnings and a vivid and hopeful bouquet of wishes for the future. Day-dreaming? No, I would borrow Schumpeter's "creative destruction" term to describe these seeds of a brewing revolution.

And the stage has become bigger! WONCA Europe has been our birthplace, but we are now privileged to be a part of an even larger family: the WONCA global network of new and future Family Doctors, which consists of seven movements in every region of the World. How exciting times lie ahead of us!

As a closing remark, I would like to thank all of you who have ever contributed in our Movement with passion and enthusiasm; and I wish to urge you:

To continue to invest in yourselves, in your creative confidence: as innovators and leaders. Believe in your ability to create meaningful change in the world around you and achieve what you set out to do.

To put what you have learned from your global experience into action as soon as possible. To become ambassadors: help other colleagues discover the opportunities, help them explore a different mind-set.

And finally, always have a bias towards action.



