

Feedback from WONCA Africa, Rustenburg 2008

Sunday 25th Oct

The 2nd WONCA Africa Regional Conference in Rustenburg was opened by the South African Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi. He related the shame he felt at the Maternal Mortality statistics. He spoke of government commitment to improve this and his desire to restore hospital-based training of midwives. He saw a strong role for Family Physicians in this effort. He spoke several times of the priority within government of Primary Health Care and Family Medicine. He spoke of the unacceptable inequity between private and public health care. Dr Andrew Robinson, in his introduction of the Minister, referred to the important task of the conference of 'Africanising' Family Medicine.

Monday 26th Oct

Prof Michael Kidd from Australia looked at "the Role of Family Medicine in Africa in the 21st Century in the light of the theme of "Defining Family Medicine in Africa". He supported Prof Mfenyana's quest to go deeper into defining Family Medicine so that we are reading off the same page and move towards strong integrated PHC services. Prof Kidd spoke of the African need for Family Medicine as central to Primary Care but one that needs to adapt to respond to the needs in Africa. He quoted Barbara Starfield evidence that family physicians improve outcomes and urged delegates to be the change we seek. Prof Otsyula from Kenya spoke frankly, in Fanonist tradition, on colonialism and neo colonialism. He urged Family Medicine to be defined in an authentic African manner and not imposed inappropriately in Africa. Prof Bob Mash presented the Delphi Study on Defining Family Medicine in Africa.

Tuesday 27th October 2009

Prof Mustafa Khogali, of Sudan, spoke on "COPC / FM training in Africa: A way forward". He pointed out the poor mortality rates, high disease burden, weak fragmented health systems and the lack of appropriately trained health care workers in Africa. He lamented the failure in Africa of achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He highlighted principles of health systems as optimizing health care and improving access and stated that this could only be achieved through primary care. He pointed that the South African situation of public-private and PHC-hospital disparities exists throughout Africa. He highlighted the inequitable focus on specialized curative services. Dr Martha Ladipo, of Nigeria, spoke on "African Family Values and Practice of Family Medicine in Africa". She spoke of the dynamic nature of family values and the fundamental differences between individualistic Western and communalistic African family values.

Wednesday 28th October 2009

Prof Jan De Maeseneer, of Belgium, spoke on "Primary Health Care and Family Medicine in Africa at the cross-roads!". There was much stress on how much Africa has to offer the world. He highlighted a changing society and the role of primary care (and Family Medicine) as a strategy to address social determinants of health by promoting equity and inter-sectoral action. The primary health care team and a community-oriented primary care (COPC) were key. He felt that PHC reform of health care systems will need to address hospital-centric and fragmented systems and develop primary care as the hub, networking with community and partners. He pointed out World Health Assembly Resolution 62.12 which included Family Physicians in the Primary Health Care team. He raised his concern for a clear role for Family Physicians in Primary Health Care Services in Africa.