

Peter Tschudi, President of the Scientific Committee, Wonca Conference 2009 Basel

Wonca Conference 2009 in Basel: scientific highlights



Peter Tschudi on top of Piz Bernina (13 160 feet), Switzerland.

Highlight number 1 was the starting signal: for the first time ever we had the privilege of staging the European scientific Family Medicine congress, the Wonca Europe Conference 2009, in Basel, in conjunction with the annual SGAM Conference.

Highlight number 2 was the birth of the conference theme – “Complexity and Uncertainty”. The fascination of Family Medicine, of day-to-day practice, also includes fascination about the complexity of the individual patient within a field of

uncertainty. Complexity and uncertainty are an inseparable pair.

Highlight number 3 was to give the abstract theme a scientific countenance and to set “Complexity and Uncertainty” running like a central thread through the conference programme, from the first minute to the last. To this end, the Scientific Committee set up 24 special workshops, so-called “wild cards”, with an interdisciplinary membership strictly correlated to the conference theme, to which it invited personalities from a variety of countries.

Highlight number 4 will be the main lecturers who will address the complex themes of our time, that are a source of uncertainty but at the same time fascinate us in everyday practice on a European-wide basis: innovative technologies, nanosciences, neurobiology, gene technology, ecological and environmental factors. The seven keynote lectures, given by renowned personalities from Switzerland, Europe and beyond, will address these important challenges in the context of Family Medicine and its complexities.

Highlight number 5 will be the two hot topics which will close each day's conference proceedings: up-to-the-minute issues are the A/H1N1 influenza pandemic (swine flu) and the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination.

Highlight number 6: Some 1200 abstracts on topics varying from the fields of teaching, research, daily practice, quality improvement, professional profile, healthcare economics, interdisciplinary cooperation, emergency medicine, IT, ethics and prevention for example have been received from Europe and worldwide sources. Out of these, the Scientific Committee, with the support of an international reviewer board, has compiled a scientific programme of approximately 1000 presentations. A total of 184 hours of scientific Family Medicine will be presented daily in 17 parallel sessions. 130 hours of workshops will be on offer (including 10 from the Swiss Institute for Family Medicine and 20 for the concurrent SGAM Conference in German and French), together with 300 short presentations and 555 posters on findings from Family Medicine research and projects.

Highlight number 7 will be two especially appealing practical workshops which will present definite examples of “complexity” and “uncertainty”:

- “A simple way to treat a complex problem: medical didgeridoo playing against sleep apnoea and snoring”;
- “Mountain climbing within the exhibition hall: experience decision-making / behaviour in risk and stress situations”.

Highlight number 8 are the three scientific pre-conferences in the run-up to the main event:

- Research: Pre-conference clinical research course: “Designing clinical research in ambulatory care settings – an introductory course for general practitioners”;
- Teaching: “The ethics of teaching in Primary Care”;
- Practice: “Evidence-based gastroenterology in Primary Care”.

Highlight number 9 are the young European and Swiss doctors of the “Vasco da Gama Movement”, who will meet two days before the conference on the theme “An introduction to the idea of being a GP in the European context”. This meeting will occur in order for them to develop their ideas and views on professional philosophy and practice structures, exchange knowledge and experience, and widen their horizons in the sphere of Family Medicine from a European perspective, with the aim of further developing and improving Family Medicine in their own countries and in Europe.

Highlight number 10 is the presentation of the book jointly produced by Wonca World and the WHO, “Integrating Mental Health into Primary Care – a Global Perspective”. Given the large number of people suffering simultaneously from physical and mental diseases, the integration of psychiatric care represents a significant improvement for the population's health provision.

Highlight number 11 is the finishing line: the abstract book, containing additional in-depth information on all the conference presentations. As a total novelty for Wonca, the abstract book will be issued as a supplement to the Medline-listed international journal “Swiss Medical Weekly”. Thus, for the first time, all the abstracts from this European Wonca Conference, in Basel, will remain available on the Internet for “eternity”. Truly a highlight!

These highlights we owe to the superlative teamwork of the Scientific and Organising Committees and the congress organisers Dr Schlegel Healthworld Ltd. A very special word of thanks is due to OC President Dr Bruno Kissling!

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