

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Piloting an Asia Pacific Research Forum (*p*ASPAREF)

The twelfth Wonca Asia Pacific Regional Conference 2002 in Kuala Lumpur witnessed the presentation of 155 papers by family physicians from 22 countries in the Asia Pacific region. A total of 108 or 70% of these were research papers. It is a good sign that family physicians are emerging from their traditional roles as healers of the sick to doctors whose self-reflective practices are set to achieve quality care for their patients.

In a wide region such as the Asia Pacific, large numbers of family physicians in both urban and rural areas, can initiate a lot more meaningful research activities. It may be asking too much for every family physician to be a researcher, but we can look forward to an era where every family physician understands research and applies the results to his daily practice.

It is with this prime objective that a few family physicians gathered at the conference feel that the way ahead is to work towards the proposed piloting of an Asia Pacific Research Forum or *p*ASPAREF in short.

As a first phase, the Singapore–Malaysia group proposed to pilot the setting-up of a forum comprising a congregation of research-oriented family physicians and other primary care professionals with the task of construction of a web-based research tool kit at the Wonca website at <http://www.globalfamilydoctor.com>. Information on research methodology will be available to primary care professionals at the convenience of their clinics or residences. Hyperlinks with other relevant research websites will also be established.

The Wonca Asia Pacific Regional Vice-President, Associate-Professor Goh Lee Gan, also proposed the setting up of a 'research crucible'. This is a platform at the same website in which, as a means of tapping on research expertise and to optimize resources, family physicians may invite collaborators to 'experiment with their research projects'. The first phase will also include the sourcing and inclusion of current medical literature as resource material for critical appraisal.

Such exercises will sharpen the analytical skills of family physicians once they are familiar with the basic research tools.

The Singapore–Malaysia group intends to share its experience gained in the setting-up of the pilot Forum at the Beijing meeting next year.

Indeed, this forum once established will serve as a catalyst to promote family medicine research in the whole Asia Pacific arena. We will be talking to the Chairman of Research in Asia Pacific Wonca, about mainstreaming once we have some viable signs of life.

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