

EQuIP Meeting, Rouen, France, 22-24 November 2001

First Turkish National Family Practice Days performed

New designation places for family physicians

First professor of family medicine

EUROPEP translated into Turkish

Patient records: efforts for standardization started

Core curriculum development discussed

New criteria for associate professorship

Fifth Turkish National Family Practice Congress in March 2002

- **A few Words About Family Medicine in Turkey**

Family medicine exists as a specialty in Turkey since 1983. Most of the advances have been achieved during the last years, resembling a geometrical growth rate. Today there are 26 family practice departments in 39 medical faculties, serving to a population of around 65 million people. Beyond the departments at the faculties, there are nine other teaching hospitals with family practice residency programs. The first residency program started in 1985. Today there are around 1000 graduated family physicians and 500 residents. Being aware of the need for postgraduate education, also the untrained GP's (who are more than 57 thousand in number) have established an institute (The Institute of General Practice) and started their own program. This institute lacks any support or supervision of the universities. Although this makes their programs inofficial, the Turkish Medical Association insists on this institute. The main reason for this seems to be their political disagreements with the Turkish Ministry of Health.

- **First Turkish National Family Practice Days Performed**

National congresses of family medicine are performed every 2 years in Turkey. The fifth congress, which was expected to be in 2001, was postponed to March 2002. This caused family physicians to start organizing family practice days after each congress. The first Turkish national family practice days were performed during 2-5 November 2001 in Edirne. Topics important for family physicians were discussed during the four days with over 150 participants.

Dr. Janko Kersnik from Slovenia, Dr. Bodossakis Merkouris and Dr. Athanassios Simeonidis from Greece, and Dr. Deborah Ulmer and Dr. William Kerns from USA were invited lecturers from other countries.

- **New Designation Places for Family Physicians**

As every new specialty, family practice fights its way in the definition of its tasks and responsibilities. Until recently, family physicians who decided to work for the state had only one choice: the mother-child health care and family planning centers. With the new arrangements, family physicians gained new positions at the state hospitals as well as the district policlinics of the state hospitals. As the next step, family physicians want to be charged at the small health centers in the health districts where they will be able to give primary care service.

- **First Professor of Family Medicine**

The number of family physicians with academic titles increases from day to day. Until recently there were more than 30 assistant professors, 6 associate professors, and 2 professors (residency made in public health). The academic title of the first family medicine professor was celebrated during the national family practice days. This event was a strong motivator for family physicians throughout Turkey.

- **EUROPEP Translated Into Turkish**

EQuIP's instrument for the evaluation of primary care physicians and their practices by the patients is

translated into Turkish. For statistical evaluation, the instrument was applied to 1160 patients of 33 doctors. Although there is no law obligating patient feedback and the family practice board is not active yet, family physicians are willing to apply EUROPEP to their patients for self-evaluation.

- Patient Records: Efforts for Standardization Started

Although it is obligated by law to keep patient records, the details of the record system are not defined. In the current state policlinics of the state and university hospitals keep their records by just writing down the name, age, diagnosis and medication of the patient. For inpatients, an unstandardized, source oriented record system is used. And many of the physicians working in private offices don't use any record at all. One of the workshops during the family practice days focused in this issue. A core group was established, priorities were defined and a work plan was developed. This group will continue to work with the aim to develop a well structured, standardized, and flexible problem oriented record system meeting the needs of the primary care physicians. Eventually, a record system will be developed for the use of Turkish family physicians.

- Core Curriculum Development Discussed

One of the problems of Turkish family physicians is the lack of a core curriculum for family practice residency. The curriculum accepted by the Ministry of Health is composed of rotations in different wards (internal medicine, emergency ward, pediatrics, gynecology and obstetrics, and psychiatry) at the hospital. Currently primary care places are not involved in the residency education. Family practice departments try to overcome this problem by personal dialogue with the involved departments. On the other hand, also the content of the rotations at the different wards is not defined.

As many of the family practice departments have developed their own curriculum for residency education, it was decided to bring the present work together in order to establish a common core curriculum. Family physicians from different places in Turkey came together to establish a group dealing with this issue. First results of the work are expected to be available during the national congress in March 2002.

- New Criteria for Associate Professor Exam

Associate professorship is an important position in the Turkish academic system. Candidates for associate professorship have to pass an oral exam, which is done by a jury of five professors. The candidates have also to convince the jury to their competency with regard to published work. Until recently there were no standards for this examination. With the last arrangements done by the higher education council, candidates are requested to have published at least three articles in journals listed at the Science Citation Index. In at least one of the articles, the candidate has to be the first author. In addition, the professors who want to be jury members need to have certain qualifications. They need to have at least one citation to their work published in one of the biomedical journals listed at the Science Citation Index.

There was a lot of debate during the re-organization process of this issue. Political pressure was applied to remove family medicine from the associated professorship list. Fortunately, family physicians throughout Turkey tightened together and prevented this campaign. In front of this drive being again the Turkish Medical Association, advocating for the Institute of General Practice as a substitution for family medicine.

- Fifth Turkish National Family Practice Congress in March 2002

The fifth Turkish Family Practice Congress, which was postponed due to economical reasons, will be done in Adana between 27 and 30 March 2002. The academic staff of Çukurova University Family Practice Department will organize the event. Details to the congress will be available at the web page www.ailehekimi.org. Congress president will be Prof. Dr. Nafiz Bozdemir (ndemir@cu.edu.tr)

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