

FRIDAY 7th MAY, 2010:

Location : Novotel Plovdiv

09.00 - 09.20: 1st Keynote Speaker: *Dr. Hans van der Wouden, PhD* – The Netherlands.

Theme: “Research in Children in General Practice: not popular yet feasible”.

Childhood and adolescence are the most dynamic periods of life in terms of growth, exposure to new infectious agents, changes in the immune system, and physical and social maturation. The frequency of primary care consultations in the first years of life is high, and children show specific morbidity patterns. It is illusive to assume that recommendations for managing childhood disorders can be guided by either research performed in adults or research performed in secondary or even tertiary care settings.

The proportion of primary care research devoted to children is however surprisingly small. A quick scan of original research papers in six primary care journals over the year 2009 shows that less than 10% of papers concerned children or adolescents.

Several hypothetical reasons for this discrepancy can be thought of, for example:

- research in children is hard to fund
- research in children is unethical
- research in children is too difficult
- research in children is hard to publish.

In my presentation I will address and refute most of these arguments, illustrated with examples from primary care studies from all around Europe. The point I would like to make is that, if properly prepared and organized, it is entirely feasible to successfully perform studies in children in primary care that answer clinically relevant questions and are adequately powered.

From a wider perspective (not exclusively focused on children) I will address the pitfalls of patient recruitment in general practice and give examples of study characteristics that are related to successful completion of studies. My conclusion will be that by taking these factors into account, research in children in general practice is perfectly feasible.

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SATURDAY 8th MAY, 2010:

Location : Novotel Plovdiv

08.30 – 08.50: 2nd Keynote Speaker: *Assoc. Professor Valentina Madjova – Bulgaria.*

Theme: “Challenges facing child healthcare in Bulgaria”.

As we all know, the end of the 20th century brought about dramatic changes in our country’s political system, and along with it came a series of reforms in our healthcare system.

The onset of family medicine development is as late as 1997, when departments of General Medicine/Family medicine were established in all five medical universities throughout the country. Three years later, restructuring primary health care (PHC) transformed outpatient therapists and paediatricians into “general practitioners”.

While in the beginning of the healthcare reform we had 5800 GP practices, ten years later, there are a thousand less, with an average number of patients served by one family physician above 1500 people. Another tendency is the merging of solo practices into group practices, either private medical centres or larger healthcare structures.

All the above-mentioned features of family practice in Bulgaria led to serious challenges facing our child healthcare efforts. On one hand, demographic processes everywhere in Europe demand a special focus on children’s health. For several reasons this is of particular importance for our country: the Bulgarian birth rate is among the lowest in Europe, and abortions are frequent. These negative demographic trends lead to a gradual aging of the average population. On the other hand however, child healthcare in Bulgaria has some important advantages: 1) many GPs have specialized in paediatrics, have specific knowledge and skills and use various approaches in their work with; 2) serious research has been made into childhood obesity, diabetes and diabetic nephropathy in children, although conducting research with children is difficult because of specific characteristics – clinical, ethical and administrative; 3) most preventive activities of Bulgarian GPs are directed towards children.

Recently, there have been new legislative measures adopted to foster child healthcare, school-based health centres and youth policy. Still, it’s difficult to find the balance between general tendencies in child diseases and the particular lifestyle characteristics of young Bulgarians. Managing such a balance is a challenge and one of our most important current goals.

Assoc. Prof. Valentina Madjova, MD, PhD

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