Spice Route Movement: Forum for Young and Future Family Physicians / Primary Care Physicians of South Asia

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**Abstract**

The past 6 years have seen the worldwide emergence of movements lead by New and Future Family/General Practitioners. The main aim of these movements is the promotion of excellence in the field of family medicine/general practice to respond the challenges pertaining to Global Health. This article will discuss some of the work being done worldwide, and in particularly in South Asia, in the context of The Spice Route movement. At the end of the article, details of the next steps to be taken and of ways in which interested parties can get involved are given.

**Keywords:** Global health, international medicine, World Organisation of Family Doctors, young and future family physicians

The Challenges of the Global Health and the Role of Primary Care

Global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide (Koplan, 2009). Global health emphasizes transnational health issues, determinants, and solutions; involves many disciplines within and beyond the health sciences and promotes interdisciplinary collaboration; and is a synthesis of population based prevention with individual-level clinical care. The term “Global Health” refers to the scope of problems, not their location. Thus, like public health but unlike international health, global health can focus on domestic health disparities as well as cross-cultural and multi-lingual issues within our own countries (Koplan, 2009). Global Health also encompasses the notion of co-operation with other healthcare professionals to improve patient care locally, nationally, and internationally.

World Organisation of Family Doctors

The World Organisation of Family Doctors (WONCA) is a leader in promoting work toward these goals: it encourages the development of academic organisations of family physicians, provides a forum for exchange of knowledge and information between member organisations and represents the educational, research, and service provision activities of family physicians to other professional organisations and forums concerned with healthcare and medical practice.

WONCA has an impact on the world of family medicine through its World Council and its Regional Councils in seven regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific, East Mediterranean, Europe, Iberoamericana, North America, and South Asia). It has numerous committees and working groups on problems encountered in general family practice, including rural practice, education, communication, and research.[1]

The Emergency of Movements for Young and Future Family Practitioners

The past 6 years have witnessed worldwide emergence of movements lead by New and Future Family/General Practitioners (GP). The main aim of these movements was to promote excellence in the field of family medicine/general practice to address the challenges pertaining to Global Health.

Following the WONCA model and geographic regions, groups of new and future family/general practitioners from around the world have worked together to promote these concepts. These groups intend to help new and future family/general practitioners identify their own concerns and needs and help address them through forums, support, and information. These groups facilitate the involvement of young and future family physicians

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in international educational activities related to general practice. They also aim to improve the quality of training programs for general practice and to collaborate with national and international academic institutions and general practice professional societies to stimulate the formation of young and future family physicians representation and leadership.

To illustrate the structure of groups for Young and Future Family Physicians within the wider national and international context, the example of the UK and Europe will be shown.

The Vasco de Gama Movement was the first of these groups and it was formally launched at the Kos WONCA Europe Conference in Greece (2005). Successful pre-conferences have since been held in Florence (2006), Paris (2007), Istanbul (2008), Basel (2009), Malaga (2010), and Warsaw (2011). One of the great success stories of the Vasco de Gama Movement has been the Hippokrates exchange program, through which European Family Physicians have been able to undertake observation roles in other European countries. This has led to broadening of horizons and to the stimulation of exchanges of ideas and knowledge amongst Family Physicians internationally. The Vasco de Gama Movement Education and Training theme group has worked on a questionnaire into motivation and satisfaction with GP training across Europe which has recently been published in The British and European Journals of General Practice. The Vasco de Gama Movement Research Theme Group aims to provide an active network and platform for young European GPs interested in research in primary care. They have worked in collaboration with European General Practice Research Network (EGPRN) to provide a series of research workshops at WONCA Europe conferences aimed at training new and trainee GPs. In the UK, this group was founded in 2008-9 and is called Junior International Committee (JIC). It is structured as part of a Senior National Organisation - The RCGP- Royal College of General Practitioners.

The Rajakumar Movement was launched in Hong Kong in 2009, as the Movement for Young and Future Family practitioners in the Asia-Pacific region. A Rajakumar pre-conference was held at the WONCA Conference in Cebu, Philippines, in February 2011. In 2010, the Naffdona Movement was launched for Young and Future Family practitioners of North America. The Waynakay Movement for of Iberoamericana also began in 2010. Waynakay now has representatives from 11 out of 20 countries in the WONCA region. The main focus of Waynakay activities is the preparation of a workshop at the next Iberoamerican Confederation of Family Doctors (CIMF) Regional Conference in Cuba, in March 2012. Waynakay has also joined the Hippokrates exchange program established by the Vasco de Gama Movement and are just starting to have their first exchanges. Waynakay are also in the process of finishing their constitution and hope to soon obtain legal status as a non-profit organization. The latest addition to the family is The Spice Route Movement for the Young and Future family Physicians of South Asia.\[6,7\]

**Spice Route Movement**

The Spice Route Movement was officially inaugurated at the WONCA South Asia Regional Conference in Kathmandu, Nepal in December 2010. At that conference, there were opportunities for Young and Future Family Practitioners of India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka to exchange ideas and establish the basic structure of The Spice Route Movement.

In India, links were made between The Spice Route and senior organisations such as the Federation of the Family Physician's Associations of India (FFPAI) and the Academy of family Physicians of India (AFPI). In Nepal, an online forum for discussion for Young and Future Family Physicians of Nepal was created. Work continues to support the ongoing formation of strong Young and Future Family Physician representation in the countries represented in Kathmandu in 2010 as well as other countries of the WONCA South Asia region.\[6,7\]

**The Spice Route—Mission and Vision**

1. Foster mentoring between current and future leaders in family medicine in the South Asia Region.
2. Promote representation by young family medicine leaders in the South Asia Region.
3. Allow Young and Future Family Physicians an avenue to explore the greater depth of our clinical discipline.
4. Expose young doctors to the cultural differences in family medicine across our region.
5. Provide an international perspective on training in family medicine and enable us to work together within our region to strengthen the role of primary health care in each of our communities.
6. Contribute to the development of new structures to support high quality primary health care with ideas from the future family medicine workforce.
7. Promote training in family medicine and induct fresh graduates in family practice.
8. Promote family medicine in the South Asia region.
9. Allow learning from the diverse, old and young countries in our region where there are many models of family medicine.
10. Explore possibilities of exchanges with other movements.

**Spice Route—Aims and Objects**

1. To improve Education and Training for Young FP/GP in the South Asia Region.
2. To increase opportunities for New and Future FP/GP to develop skills in:
   i. Family and General Practice Research
   ii. Family and General Practice Publication
   iii. Family and General Practice Presentations at National and International Conferences
   iv. Family and General Practice Exchanges
3. To give a platform for New and Future FP/GPs to share their concerns, doubts and aspirations and help to address them.

4. To encourage New and Future FP/GP Leadership through participation in Spice Route’s executive structure.

   i. At the latest WONCA South Asia Regional Conference that was held in Mumbai, India, from 16 to 18 December 2011, The Spice Route Movement held its first pre-conference program, thereby giving young and future Family practitioners/primary care physicians from the region and beyond a forum to discuss issues pertinent to them, with a particular focus on The Spice Route organisational structure and communication channels, education, training and faculty development, primary care research, and international exchanges. The agenda that was addressed at the pre-conference in Mumbai on 16 December 2011 include the continuation of work toward the next steps of development of the The Spice Route Movement, The Spice Route structure and communication channels workshop:

   a. Strengthening of a core group of The Spice Route members and national representatives
   b. Creation of a Facebook group (Spice Route Movement)
   c. Creation of a website (to be announced)
   d. Funding
   e. Strengthening links with senior organisations across the region

   f. Creating links with other countries in the South Asia region: Afghanistan, the Maldives and Bhutan, and with other groups such as Vasco de Gama, Rajakumar, Naffdona and Waynakay.

   ii. Education, training and faculty development

   a. Comparative studies of education and training systems, and curricula within the region
   b. Development of recommendations to senior organisations and policy makers

   iii. Research

   a. Liaison with existing Primary Care Research groups
   b. Spice Route platform for presentation at future pre-conferences, and publications in affiliated journals such as the Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care http://www.jfmpc.com
   c. Research methodology workshops at future Spice Route events

   iv. Exchange programmes

   a. Organisation and funding of opportunities to learn from each other, first hand, at a national, regional and international level, including participation at WONCA conferences and Spice Route pre-conferences in the South Asia and other regions.
Self illustrated photographs from the recently organized WONCA South Asia regional conference are included in this article. A future article will go into more depth about developments which arose from the pre-conference held in Mumbai.

If you are interested you can get involved in the following ways:
1. Read more on the FFPAI and AFPI websites: http://www.ffpai.org/the_spice_route.aspx and http://afpionline.com/TheSpiceRoute.aspx
2. Nepal Online Group:https://groups.google.com/group/future-and-young-family-practitioners-of-nepal
3. The Spice Route Facebook Group: “Spice Route Movement”
4. Liaise with Spice Route representatives:
   i. Dr. Raman Kumar-Chairman: dr_raman@hotmail.com
   ii. Dr. Bijay Raj bijayraj23@gmail.com and Dr. Uddit Thakker-National Liaison-India: uthakker@hotmail.com
   iii. Dr. Pramendra Prasad- National Liaison-Nepal: dr.pramen@gmail.com
   iv. Dr. Samreen Kausar-National Liaison-Pakistan: samreen.kausar@aku.edu
   v. Dr. Deepama Sumanasekera- National Liaison- Sri Lanka rndeepama@gmail.com
   vi. Dr. Md Innamin-National Liaison- Bangladesh: nibhuiyan59@yahoo.com
   vii. Dr. Sonia Mehra-Secretary and International Liaison: soniacherygp@gmail.com

Acknowledgements

Dr. Jessica Watson, JIC UK, Dr. Luisa Pettigrew, Vasco de Gama, Dr. Pramendra Prasad, Nepal, Dr. Raman Kumar, AFPI India, Essie Maduro, Waynakay, Luisa Pettigrew- "Vasco da Gama Movement Exchange Liaison Person 2009-2011.

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How to cite this article: Mehra SJ. Spice route movement: Forum for young and future family physicians / primary care physicians of South Asia. J Fam Med Primary Care 2012;1:62-5.

Source of Support: Nil. Conflict of Interest: None declared.