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<b>Author :</b>	<b>Prof. Nolte</b>
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Report of the Liaison Officer to the European Forum of Medical  
**Associations and WHO (EFMA/WHO)**

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The last meeting of the EFMA/WHO took place from April 16-17, 2004 in Dubrovnik, Croatia. It was organized by the Croatia Medical Chamber, represented by Prof. Dr. Egidio Cepulic.

The Forum was attended by more than 80 delegates from 28 countries and European or world-wide organisations like the World Federation for Medical Education.

It took place in the beautifully located Excelsior Hotel overlooking the Adriatic Sea and the old city of Dubrovnik.

Topics at the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EFMA/WHO included:

- Tobacco Control Activities
- Citizen's responsibilities for health – "Patient empowerment"
- Teaching of managerial skills to physicians
- CME/CPD in Europe
- Suicide prevention
- Epidemics and Interventions
- Health policy reforms in Europe
- Health reforms and physician's autonomy

The Forum was opened by the President of the Croatian Medical Chamber, Dr. Hrvoje Minigo and the Secretary of State, Ministry of Health, Prof. Velimir Bozikov.

First of all a detailed report about the last Forum in 2003 in Berlin was distributed to all delegates.

The Agenda started with two presentations about the Croatian health situation:

- "Present situation in the health system in Croatia", given by Prof. V. Bozikov and
- "Active teaching – basic approach in curriculum of Zagreb Medical School", presented by Prof. Boris Labar, Dean of the Medical Faculty of the University of Zagreb.

Dr. Mila Garcia-Barbero reported from the WHO Regional Office in Barcelona. It was followed by the report of the EFMA/WHO Liaison Committee's Secretary General, Dr. René Salzberg from Switzerland, who explained the new situation after WHO Europe, the co-founding partner of EFMA/WHO, had made the decision to cancel most of its financial support it had given since 1984. However, the Liaison Committee renewed its intentions to seek cooperation and support at WHO. Dr. Mila Garcia-Barbero was also asked to give this message to Dr. Marc Danzon, the Regional Director of WHO Euro, who had written a letter to the Secretary General of EFMA/WHO dated April 15, 2004 (enclosed).

The Tobacco Control Activities of EFMA/WHO were reported by Dr. Klas Winell, who unfortunately resigned from his position as chairman of the Tobacco Action Group. Dr. Haik Nikogosian, WHO Europe, presented the "Recent developments on tobacco control in the WHO region and prospects of collaboration with medical professional organizations". He also explained the "Action Points for NMA's recommended by WHO", which are as well as the Code of Practice on Tobacco Control for Health Professional Organizations" added to this report.

Dr. Sinaed Jones from the Tobacco Control Resource Center (TCRC), gave a report on "Challenges for the medical profession that come from Framework Convention of Tobacco Control." The Tobacco Control Resource Center of the British Medical Association, Edinburgh, supports national medical associations across Europe in their efforts to inform their members, help patients and promote effective policies on tobacco.

The EFMA/WHO adopted at its conference in Dubrovnik on April 17, 2004, the following statement:

*Recognizing* that tobacco use remains the largest single cause of preventable disease and death in Europe

*Concerned* that of all WHO Regions, the European Region has the highest rate of tobacco-related disease, death and disability

*Recalling* the Forum's record of action on tobacco, its endorsement of the Doctors' Manifesto for Global Tobacco Control and its support for an effective, evidence-based WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

This Meeting

1. *Urges* national medical associations to taking action to encourage their government to sign and ratify the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control as a matter of urgency, and to implement it to the full

2. *Endorses* the WHO Code of practice, adopted at its meeting in Geneva on January 28 – 30, 2004, as a guideline for health professional organizations on tobacco.

Another main topic of the EFMA/WHO conference was the “Citizen’s responsibility for health – ‘Patient empowerment’”. Ms. Leah Wapner, Secretary General of the Israeli Medical Association, gave a report of a survey in Europe. There is a report of survey among national medical associations 2002 – 2003 available from the Regional Office for Europe WHO, Barcelona, under EUR 03/5038099/6.

Dr. Borman, UK, concluded this session with a speech “From professionalism to partnership”. The potential benefits of the empowered and competent patient are for example a better compliance with therapy, improved out-comes, increased health awareness and a better understanding of the necessities on both sides, the patients and doctors relationship.

The first day of the conference ended with a presentation of Dr. Brunner and Dr. Berchthold from Switzerland about “Teaching and managerial skills to physicians”. Today’s challenges for the medical profession contain in the systematisation of the medical knowledge and work, e.g. in clinical protocols, guidelines and DRG’s. The introduction of financial incentives and the regulation of medicine by governments and health insurances lead to a reduction of clinical autonomy, to an increasing demand on accountability and to the attempts to bring medicine under managerial and cost control. This increases any work related stress.

Therefore, any attempt to reform healthcare requires understanding of the distinct subcultures of the medical and the managerial staff in order to reach convergence. This means improving management skills of physicians and less economic and more integrative medical orientation of managers.

The second day of the conference started with a session on continuing medical education and continuing professional development (CME/CPD) in Europe. The first presentation was given by Prof. Hans Karle, President of the World Federation of Medical Education (WFME) on “Quality of Medical Education in Europe”. WFME is the global organization concerned with education and training of medical doctors. It is a non-governmental organization in relation to WHO with its central office at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, in collaboration with the University of Lund, Sweden.

Both have built the Copenhagen-Lund University Center for International Medical Education. The objectives are to stimulate authorities, organizations and institutions responsible for medical education to formu-

late their plans for change and reforms and for quality improvement in keeping with international recommendations by specifying well-defined international standards in medical education. The presentation has given a good overview on the definitions, fundamentals, rationale, effectiveness, organization, providers and standards of CME/CPD and the role of WFME to achieve such goals.

A further session dealt the "Suicide prevention". There were reports on the situation and the prevention programs in Slovenia and in Switzerland and also a presentation of Dr. W. Lutz from WHO Europe.

A representative of WHO Europe, Dr. B. Ganter, also reported on "Epidemics and Interventions: What lessons have we learned?" He represented the number of SARS-cases: 8098 in Asia of which 774 died and 34 cases in 11 countries of the EU of which one died. There is no local transmission.

The final session of the conference was given to discussions and conclusions of health policy reformes in Europe and their relation to physicians autonomy. Short presentations were given by NMA delegates from Germany (Prof. Hoppe), Hungary (Dr. Magyar), UK (Dr. Borman), Poland (Dr. Radziwill), Kazakhstan (Dr. Sadykova) and Belarus (Dr. Goncharova).

Prof. Hoppe reported on the German Health Modernisation Act 2004 which promised more efficiency and more quality but also delivered more bureaucracy and even more costs and rationing. It opened disease management programs (DMP's) and hospitals for ambulatory care which used to be a rare exception. It also means more co-payments for hospital stays and also for ambulatory doctor visits. No extra payment is required when joining a DMP.

Dr. Borman from the British Medical Association's International Committee reported about the British National Health Service (NHS) which is funded from general taxation and which provides equal access and provision but has produced rationing by waiting lists. The increasing private sector means paying to avoid waiting. The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) evaluates drugs, appliances and procedures in order to reduce variations, to produce standards and accountability.

During the conference there were the following new members to EFMA/WHO admitted:

- Albania
- Macedonia
- Russian Medical Society
- Cyprus Medical Association.

Dr. Salzberg, Switzerland, was reelected as Secretary General for the period 2004 – 2006.

Members of the newly elected Liaison Committee of EFMA/WHO are:

- Dr. Blachar (Israel)  
Dr. Brettenthaler (Austria)  
Dr. Kloiber (Germany)  
Dr. Lobzhanidze (Georgia)  
Dr. Mart (Luxemburg)  
Dr. Nunes (Portugal)
- FORUM PRESIDENTS    Dr. Cepulic (Croatia), 2004  
                                  Dr. Bakke (Norway), 2005  
                                  Prof. Magyar (Hungary), 2006
- WHO                            Dr. Garcia-Barbero
- INFRASTRUCTURE        Dr. Brunner (Switzerland)
- OBSERVERS                Dr. Vigen (Handbook)  
                                  Dr. Winnel (Finland, TAG)
- SECRETARY GENERAL    Dr. Salzberg (Switzerland)

The EFMA/WHO Conference was followed by a workshop on "Clinical risk management and medical malpractice insurance" by Prof. E. Cepulic from de Croation Medical Chamber.

A long report on "Survey on Regulation and Licensing of Physicians in the European Region of WHO" (EUR/0453080085/BD) edited by Dr. Alan Rowe was distributed during the conference. All rights of this available document are reserved by the WHO Regional Office for Europe. However, it may be freely reviewed, abstracted, reproduced or translated into any other language provided that full acknowledgement is given to the source.

The next EFMA/WHO conference will take place in Oslo, Norway, March 11 – 12, 2005.

Prof. Dr. H. Nolte  
1<sup>st</sup>-Vice Chairman