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## *Prologue*

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Conceiving of a World Book of Family Medicine is easy. Actually making one is a lot harder. We started in 1995 and 20 years later, we present you this present in the present. It contains a lot of history and the roots for a lot of future plans.

We leafed through 20 years of abstracts, including those presented at World Conferences, made a long list, selected a jury who then made a short list of 100 titles that best represented our job. During this process, it became obvious that we had selected mostly European titles, hence, this is the European Edition of the World Book. We do hope that other regions will follow, and also hope that a following generation will create **The** World Book of Family Medicine. Time will tell.

In the process of finding the original authors, some were lost due to natural causes – death, illness, retirement. We then went to find body-doubles, and it will be no surprise that a lot of the youngsters of the Vasco da Gama Movement are authoring themes that were researched almost before they were born – offering a splendid proof that memory is a living organism that is constantly recreated and growing.

We owe a lot to the 100 authors who finally drafted their 1000 words, selected take home messages and showed us the sources of their thoughts, with references.

They were put under time pressure, some had to redraft, and then everything was being proofread by our outstanding Miss Naomi Uludamar. We owe her so much.

All the authors joined us in a journey towards ... a growing body of evidence that WONCA and WONCA Europe inspire, teach and learn.

We show them our eternal gratitude and honour them. Thank you all!

While editing this World Book, it became also obvious that there is no such thing as one kind of General Practice or Family Medicine. There is only a local answer to local needs. And though General Practice/Family medicine is mostly a clinical specialty, you will find none of this in this book. For then we should have taken 1000 titles. The chosen titles should be regarded as “generic”, applicable in every country – or at least most of them.

This book is a starting point.

WONCA (Europe) is the terrific place where knowledge about our field of experience, expertise and interest is exchanged. Youngsters come for a try out, PhD students lecture from their research, post docs idem, seasoned professors tell us their stories, and key note speakers from various fields come to inspire us.

Hypes come, hypes go. Some stay, as evidence based medicine – not as a golden bullet, but as an enrichment. The past 20 years brought us a lot of change and some of that wisdom changed our daily work.

To be true, this book is about people. The people that we care for, our patients, and the people that we care for, our colleagues. The reason why we make the journey to the different places, mostly terrific as well, where the Conferences take place. The more you go to a conference, the less you learn, but the more people you get to know. And their stories, which is why every Conference is a rich environment.

Then bad news arrived. Soon after she finished her contribution, Professor Fusun Yaris died, a lost battle. A few weeks later, another author, Professor Janko Kersnik had an appointment with the Great Reaper as well.

It makes us aware of our mortality. And the legacy that this book bears.

The myth of Zeus and the birth of Athena comes to mind. A quantum of solace for us, earthlings.

Fusun and Janko went early, we will follow one day. Theirs and ours and your energy however will not disappear. Our genes live in a trans-, inter- and intragenerational environment.

And as we now know, both Darwin and Wallace were right. So it is important to keep digging for ideas, knowing that

they will mutate and differentiate as well.

It is in that great tradition of creating fora for exchanging ideas that we found the inspiration for this World Book. One author referred to the famous words of Margaret Mead:

*Never underestimate the power of a few committed people to change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.*

### **Take home messages**

- The proof of the pudding however is in ... the reading.
- We hope you enjoy this World Book – European Edition.
- And that we inspire others to follow and do even better.

### **Ex Oriente Lux!**

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