

FROM THE CEO'S DESK:

WORKING WITH INDUSTRY

In the past five years, it has been my practice as the Wonca CEO to make visits to the various head-offices of the pharmaceutical multinational companies in Europe and the United States sometime in the first quarter of each year.

The purposes of these visits have been primarily:

1. To consolidate and re-establish good working relationships with the various key personalities in these companies and also acquaint myself with the new officials appointed during the year.
2. To acquaint these multinational companies with the various new programs and collaborations that Wonca has with other medical Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the World Health Organization. To explore opportunities for collaboration between our two organizations to ensure the success of these various programs.
3. To create awareness of the various Wonca regional and world conferences taking place in the year or two ahead and to help secure sponsorship support for these in connection with the conference proper, scientific tracts, satellite symposia and sale of exhibition booths.
4. To learn for myself the many physician and patient advocacy programs that these multinationals introduce each year as part of their contribution to improving global health and healthcare. To explore how Wonca as the global organization representing family doctors may be involved.
5. To secure support for the continued running and maintenance

of the Wonca Website (www.GlobalfamilyDoctor.com) and the bimonthly publication of Wonca News by way of the Wonca Global Sponsorship. This is a very important aspect of the annual visits that I make.

Over these past five years since the launch of the Wonca Website, we have seen a significant growth of the website. The latest figures monitored on visits to the site have also shown that there has been gradual and a definite increase also in the spread of countries whose family doctors use the website. In fact, it is no exaggeration to say that the Wonca Website has now become the "face" of Wonca to the world. Plans are underway by the Wonca Publications and Communications Committee to further improve the website and its contents to increase its impact and reach to global family doctors in their continuing professional education. Continued support from industry for the website is vital if Wonca is to succeed in this endeavor, again underscoring the importance of these visits.

Besides familiarizing industry with the various activities and objectives of Wonca, it is equally important that Wonca gets to know how industry in turn views the global family medicine organization and its global mission and objective. It is also important that Wonca understands how industry thinks it can work with our world organization on programs to better the health of the peoples of the world. There are those who only view the relationship between any medical NGOs and the pharmaceutical industry as a one-sided affair with industry having more to gain than the NGO. I would like to differ from this view after my experiences of working with industry for these past many years. Some of the larger multinational pharmaceutical companies have very

good and well thought out physician and patient advocacy initiatives or programs consistent with Wonca's mission and objectives and with no product links or promotion intended. Wonca seeks out these areas of collaboration with industry.

In summary, Wonca regularly updates itself on the well-meaning initiatives and programs of industry that will benefit especially the patients and to also learn how best to collaborate with industry to achieve these common goals. It is equally important for Wonca to understand how industry views Wonca's objectives and mission and desires to collaborate with Wonca to achieve them.

To this end, in this issue of Wonca News, we have started a series of interviews with key persons in industry with whom Wonca has had working relations. A fixed set of questions will be posed to each of them and the answers will be featured in upcoming issues of Wonca News.

The five questions posed in the interviews to these key persons representing their respective multinational pharmaceutical companies are:

1. How does your company see the future of family doctors and primary care in medical care globally?
2. What are your company's specific goals and programs as they relate to working with family doctors globally?
3. As a Wonca Global Sponsor, how do you see family doctor organizations working with your global and national colleagues?
4. What are the possible common areas of interest (medical related or otherwise) that your company and Wonca may collaborate on in the next three years?

5. Do you see mental health and primary care and primary care research as topics of interest to your company?

To start of the interview series, this issue of Wonca News carries the responses to the above questions posed to Soeren Rasmussen of Pfizer. I hope you will find his responses and those of future interviewees in this series interesting and useful, and especially when you desire to work with industry in your capacity as leaders in family medicine in your country.

Dr Alfred Loh
Chief Executive Officer

with the rich history, tradition and dynamic new developments in our Iberoamericana region.

In June, you have the opportunity to attend the Wonca Asia Pacific Regional Conference at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre from 4th to 7th June, 2009. The conference theme, "Building Bridges", is a metaphor for the family doctor's pivotal role as care coordinator and your opportunity to make new friends and renew old contacts in this dynamic part of our world.

You may also attend the 9th Wonca Rural Health World Conference in Crete on June 12-14, 2009, hosted by the Clinic of Social and Family Medicine, Medical Faculty, University of Crete, Greece in conjunction with the practice-based research rural network of Crete and the Europe (EURIPA). The Wonca World Rural Health Conferences always attract a devoted global following of family doctors with amazing stories and valuable lessons from their individual rural and isolated community practices.

In the fall, you have the wonderful opportunity to travel to picturesque Basel, Switzerland, for the 15th Wonca Europe Regional Conference to be held from September 16-19, 2009, featured on the back cover of this issue. The Wonca Europe Region has a long tradition of bringing together some