

# 5th International Congress of Person Centered Medicine Zagreb, Croatia 23-25 October 2017 Summary Report

*Prepared by Prof. Jon Snaedal, President of the ICPCM*

## **Background**

An important part of the international initiative on Person Centered Medicine (PCM) has been a series of International Congresses. The annual Geneva Conferences have been organized since the beginning of the initiative in 2008. In 2013, the first International Congress on PCM was arranged in Zagreb, Croatia. Since then these congresses have been an annual event but in different locations and with different sub-topics. The fifth congress was held again in Zagreb, the first venue to host a second PCM International Congress.

## **Planning**

The local organizers were the same as in 2013, Professors Veljko Djordjevic and Marijana Bras on behalf of the Zagreb Institute for the Culture of Health and Zagreb University. The international organizers on behalf of the ICPCM involved Jon Snaedal president, Juan Mezzich secretary-general and Jim Appleyard former president of the college. The theme chosen was person centered medicine in oncology.



*Standing LtoR: V. Djodjevic, S Rawaf, J. Snaedal, F. Canchihuaman, W van Lerberghe; Seated LtoR: J Appleyard, M. Bras, P. Glare, and J Mezzich at a pre-congress work meeting, 22 October 2018.*

## **Structure and Plenary Lectures**

The congress was structured following tradition in terms of plenary presentations, organized symposia, free oral presentations and posters. Prominent Croatian oncologists were present, amongst them Prof. Eduard Vrdoljak, President, Croatian Oncological Association and Professor of Medicine, University of Zagreb who gave an impressive lecture on Oncology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century at the beginning of the congress. He described how precision medicine and technology is changing

oncology very fast and will make treatment different in just a few years from now. Prof. Paul Glare, Pain Medicine, University of Sydney; Australia was a special guest as he has been instrumental in advancing palliative care in Croatia in collaboration with local professionals. He gave a plenary lecture on person centered palliative care in oncology giving special attention to pain treatment.

On the second day, the local president of the congress, professor Veljko Djordjevic gave an impressive lecture on chronic stress and person centered oncology, an important topic that has generally not received proper attention. Jon Snaedal, president of the ICPCM and professor in Geriatric Medicine, Landspítali University Hospital in Reykjavik, Iceland gave a lecture on person centered palliative care for older people with main focus on special features that need to be taken into account in caring for older people.

On the third day, Ruth Wilson, Vice-President of Wonca (World Association of Family Doctors), North America, and Professor of Family Medicine and Obstetrics, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada gave a lecture on person-centered family medicine and oncology and how these disciplines can work together to care for this patient group.

## **Symposia**

Some of the symposia were only using the Croatian language and thus, the international guests participated minimally in them. This account therefore does not cover the content of these symposia which of course is unfortunate. Other symposia were given in English, the main language of the congress.

The first international symposia was named quite figuratively “The Bases of Cancer: From genetics to the environment to the whole person” with emphasis on philosophy and ethics. Three symposia were focusing on the different type of treatment options in oncology in general, radiotherapy, surgery and different kinds of medical treatment, addressed by prominent Croatian specialists in each field. Other symposia focused on pain treatment in oncology with respect to person centeredness.

All in all, the symposia covered a wide range of topics related to oncology and person centered medicine, and also involving personalized precision medicine which seems to be on the rise in oncology as well as in many other fields of medicine. The congress has most likely convinced participants that in order to be successful in caring for and treating patients with the different forms of cancer, the ideology of person centeredness is paramount. All communication with the patient needs to take into account the person behind the disease and not only focus on the disease target at hand.

A special session was organized honoring Andrijas Stampar's legacy, a Croatian national who was the president of the first World Health Assembly of WHO. At this first Assembly, the WHO constitution was ratified in which he played a major role. Wim Van Lerberghe, a former senior officer of WHO and board member of the ICPCM, professor Veljko Djordjevic (Zagreb University) and Marijana Kujundžić-Tiljak (Zagreb University School of Public Health) gave a broad overview of Stampar's important contributions, both nationally and internationally.

At the end of the first day, a session on arts and person centered medicine was held with a memorable performance of a male choir consisting of men who had experienced laryngectomy.



*Zagreb Choir of laryngectomized patients, 23 October 2017*

The mayor of Zagreb as well as the rector of the University hosted meetings and get-together events at their respective venues, very much appreciated by the international guests.

A 2017 Zagreb Declaration was prepared focusing on oncology and person centered medicine. A draft to the Declaration was discussed and the authors received valuable comments for further work on the Declaration. It has since then been circulated and has been finalized by the board of the ICPCM.

The leaders of the ICPCM are very grateful to the local organizers for their willingness to host the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Person Centered Medicine, for their immense effort to make this come true as well as for the opportunity to come again to Zagreb and to witness the commitment of the organizers to the cause of person centered medicine.



*LtoR: W Van Staden, I Salloum, J Appleyard, R Wilson, M Botbol, V Djodjevic, S Rawaf, Zagreb Music School Dean, J Mezzich, P Glare, Danir Boras (Zagreb U Rector), J Snaedal, and F Canchihuaman, 25 October 2018.*