

**MESSAGE FROM THE WPA PRESIDENT 2005-2008
(From WPA Electronic Bulletin June 2008)**



***On the Path-opening Geneva Conference on
Person-centered Medicine***

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

The Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine on May 29 and 30, 2008 is the latest event in the unfolding WPA Psychiatry for the Person programmatic process, which also includes a London Conference in October 2007 and a Paris Conference in February 2008. This Geneva Conference also represents the beginning of a new process that is extended to medicine at large and is inter-institutionally collaborative.

In fact, the Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine took place under the auspices and on the premises of the University Hospitals of Geneva, organized by the World Psychiatric Association (WPA) Institutional Program on Psychiatry for the Person (IPPP), in collaboration with the World Medical Association (WMA), the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA), the World Federation of Neurology (WFN), the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME), the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS), the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH), the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (IAPO), and the Paul Tournier Society.



*Jean-D Dominique
Geneva Univ. Rector*



*Bernard Gruson
HUG Chief Executive*



*Jon Snaedal
WMA President*



Iona Heath
WONCA Representative



Johan Aarli
WFN President



Hans Karle
WFME President



Michel Vallotton
CIOMS President



John Copeland
WFMH President



Claudia Bartz
ICN Representative



Jo Harkness
LAPO Executive Director

The Conference was aimed at presenting and discussing the experience on person-centered principles and procedures gained under the IPPP as well as the conceptual bases of person-centered medicine, engaging interactively major international medical and health organizations, and identifying promising organizational steps for the further development of person-centered medical and health care.

The Conference was presided by Juan Mezzich (IPPP Chair and WPA President), with Michel Botbol as Conference Coordinator, Ihsan Salloum and Tom Sensky as Rapporteurs, and with the organizational support of the IPPP leadership (J.E. Mezzich, G. Christodoulou, B. Fulford, I. Salloum, R. Montenegro, A. Tasman, T. Sensky, H. Herrman, M. Amering), Geneva Task Force (J. Cox, F. Ferrero, O. Kloiber, B. Ruedi, H-R Pfeifer, A. Engstrom, P. Atiase), Office of the WPA President in New York (E. Millan, Executive Assistant; M. Han, research associate), and unrestricted grants from Johnson & Johnson and the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations.

The Conference was opened by the WPA President, the Chief Executive of the University Hospitals of Geneva, and the Rector of the University of Geneva, in the presence of the representatives of the collaborating organizations. The tradition of Geneva as setting for encounters of ideas was celebrated.



Collaborating Organizations' Leaders, Speakers and Discussants of the Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine, May 29-30, 2008

The first scientific session involved presentations of the leaders of the nine participating organizations on the meaning of person-centered medicine in the perspective of the corresponding institutions. Details on the presentations made can be found for this session as well as for all other sessions among the abstracts, short papers and powerpoints assembled as Conference Documents and presented later in this Report.

Four special initiatives relevant to person-centered care were presented in the second session. These included the World Medical Association's Caring Physicians of the World, the UK Health Department's Shared Vision Project, the patient/family/professional dialogues initiated in Europe, and an innovative Geneva University educational project.

The historical, philosophical, and ethical bases of person-centered medicine were discussed on the third session. They highlighted the articulation of science and ethics as the core of person-centered medicine.

The session that followed dealt with key experiential factors. The rich and empowering concept of personhood was analyzed, followed by the value of communication and narratives in medical healing, and the crucial framework of culture and spirituality.

A session in honor of Paul Tournier ensued, where the man and his vision were inspiringly reviewed. The crucial role of personal encounters leading to creative scientific and professional contributions were highlighted.



Participants in the Special session in Honor of Paul Tournier and a group of his relatives at the Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine, May 29-30, 2008

A penetrating analysis of the domains in the patient's overall health was the subject of the sixth session. Specific attention was paid to illness, suffering, disabilities, and the various aspects of positive health.

Clinical care organization was then discussed in terms, first, of person-centered diagnosis that would describe ill health as well positive health by employing categories, dimensions and narratives generated through clinician, patient and family interactions. Also discussed in the seventh session were key elements of person-centered clinical practice and services.

How person-centered approaches can enhance care in critical clinical areas was reviewed by focusing on the neurological-mental interphase, mother-child health care, and a range of chronic diseases. The importance of paying attention to systems issues for achieving paradigmatic shifts emerged here.

The ninth session dealt with person-centered public health by examining the patient's protagonic role in health care, the possibility of empowering persons through health information, and the enhancement of prevention and health promotion activities by attending to the whole person of the subject

The Conference's final session attempted a basic summary of the rich proceedings. The discussion of the Conference content and possible next steps revealed some contrasting and evolving perspectives as well as substantial interest in the majority of participants to pursue the goals of the Conference.



A group of participants in the Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine visiting the WPA Secretariat at the Geneva University Psychiatric Hospital, May 31, 2008.

In the days that followed, virtually all organizations that collaborated in the Conference (as well as many individual participants) expressed high views on the quality of the proceedings and the significance of the encounter and a clear disposition to remain engaged.

The major collaborative next steps would be the following:

- The publication of a volume containing the Conference papers and of editorials and papers in international journals is anticipated. Illustratively, the presidents of the WMA and WPA plan papers in their own journals but also a joint editorial in a broad international journal.
- Symposia on Person-centered Medicine would be organized at major events of the collaborating organizations and other international forums.
- A second Conference on Person-centered Medicine is contemplated for 2009. Geneva is emerging again as a promising setting.
- The delineation of an Initiative on Person-centered Medicine in collaboration with interested global medical and health organizations will be explored.

It can be said that the Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine was a truly momentous event. Not only the quality and depth of the presentations and discussions were remarkably stimulating, but an irreversible process is being perceived. The journey that those in WPA experienced in London last October and Paris this February is now extending since this May in Geneva towards Person-centered Medicine and Health Care. The path will be traveled along with colleagues in related health professions, willing to recommit to the soul of our vocation and to work respectfully and enthusiastically with our patients, articulating science and humanism, towards every person's greater health and life project's fulfillment.

Cordially yours,

Prof. Juan E. Mezzich
President of the World Psychiatric Association 2005-2008