

356: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WONCA INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY OF GENERAL/FAMILY PRACTICE

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Objective:

This paper traces the development of the WONCA International Dictionary of General/Family Practice

Methods:

WONCA (The World Organisation of General Practice) has as one of its goals to improve quality in general practice worldwide. WONCA has supported the project started by Professor Niels Bentzen (Denmark) to produce an instrument that provides good communication foundations for the development of general practice in all countries. Niels Bentzen, who is the Chair of the WONCA classification committee, set out to produce an international dictionary some years ago, which provided the basis for general practitioners to learn the meanings of new terms and concepts relevant to their profession. Part of the aim of the dictionary was to provide an international language base upon which general practitioners could communicate about their profession. Niels Bentzen (editor) enlisted the aid of four associate editors Bent Bjerre (Denmark), Chris Peterson (Australia), Deborah Saltman (Australia) and Philip Sive (Israel) to help complete the dictionary. The main purpose of the dictionary is for general practitioners to communicate effectively about the profession - the dictionary covers primary care terms, classification, research and epidemiology terms.

Results:

Together with the editor, the coeditors enlisted the aid of a large number of contributors from around the world to provide terms and definitions and to refine the text of the dictionary. The dictionary has commonalities with John Last's Dictionary of Epidemiology, but is considerably longer. The team of editor and associate editors have worked for some years to refine and review a product that will improve the quality of communication and understanding in general practice worldwide. The dictionary was published in 2003 in Denmark and may be translated into languages other than English. It is likely that a second edition will go into production shortly that will benefit from critique and feedback from general practice and other health providers and researchers from many countries. One important part of the process is that there has been in the dictionary's development an increase in shared meaning in a number of areas related to education, medical records, teaching and learning, screening and preventative medicine, risk assessment, health services and health service research.

Conclusions:

The project of producing an international dictionary has met a number of objectives. It has brought together general practitioners and other health care workers and professionals from a number of different countries on the task of refining and agreeing on concepts and the meaning of common terms. As importantly, it has led to the development of an important quality tool in general practice that provides benchmarks for the profession internationally. It also provides a framework for other health professionals and consumers of health services to dialogue meaningfully with general practice. As such it represents an important quality improvement internationally in general practice.

References

Bentzen, N. (Editor) Bjerre, B, Peterson, C, Saltman, D, and Sive, P. (Associate editors) WONCA International dictionary of general/family practice, Maanedsskrift for praktisk laegegerning (Danish publisher), Copenhagen, 2003, In press.