

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

# How to start research in general practice? Research workshop in Slovakia

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## Dear Editor

Slovak Society of General Practice of the Slovak Medical Association in collaboration with the University of Crete, organized an educational workshop for Slovak GPs in June 2011 in Senec, Slovakia. The workshop focused on research in general practice and was lead by the *Rural and Remote Health* European Region Editor, Professor Christos Lionis, a leading general medicine researcher in Europe (Fig1).

The idea for this workshop came from the members of our Society. Our members felt that research should be integrated with practice and training as in other nations (eg UK, the Netherlands, Germany and the Nordic countries). This type of education is lacking in Slovakia at graduate and postgraduate levels, and research in general practice is unfamiliar to many GPs. Unfortunately, general medicine and

primary care are considered the 'Cinderellas of medicine' – without the political support and academic base to facilitate quality education in our profession. It was therefore a great honor that Professor Lionis accepted our invitation to Slovakia to bring local research in primary health care closer to reality.

The president of our Society Dr Iveta Vaverkova, the past-president Dr Peter Liptak and other members of the executive committee took part in this interactive workshop. Other participants were GPs from a variety of rural and urban settings, including our capital and the western region of Slovakia, and younger GPs from eastern Slovakia (Fig2). Due to our collaboration with the Czech Young GPs, one participant from the Czech Republic also participated. Some participants had worked as specialists in geriatrics, pulmonary medicine and internal medicine but had changed career direction when they were attracted to general practice.



**Figure 1: Professor Christos Lionis from the University of Crete conducted the workshop on research in general practice.**



**Figure 2: The Slovak 2011 Research in General Practice Workshop participants.**

The workshop commenced with an interactive introduction where Professor Lionis explored our motivations and expectations. Great interest was expressed in practice-based research with a request for assistance in understanding what this entailed. Participants wished to move general medicine forward as equal partners in healthcare delivery with

colleagues from other specialties. In response, Professor Lionis indicated an expectation for real results from workshop participants and that the meeting would mark the beginning of research collaboration with our Society.

During the workshop we learned to formulate our research question and to identify the scientific problem and the target.



We continued with the basics of methodology and study design, concentrating on quantitative research methods, but also reviewing qualitative methods and their practical use. In addition, time was spent on literature searches using various databases and MeSH (Medical Subject Headings), for such searches will form the solid base from which to prepare our own research.

The final day was dedicated to the ethical concerns and requirements of medical research (eg ethics committee approval, informed consent). The day closed with a review of the process of review and the mechanics of publishing an original research work.

The workshop was more than a review of research theory. All participants presented their own research projects and the topics covered a broad spectrum – from factors impacting Slovak Gypsy mortality, to medical services access in rural and remote areas, to colorectal cancer screening effectiveness and heart failure in aged people's homes. The originality of our

ideas surprised Professor Lionis but this part of the workshop was found to be the most interesting and valuable. His insightful comments moved us all forward.

It was very gratifying to note the participation of rural GPs, for research in rural family practice is greatly needed. However all who participated benefitted greatly, as did our Society, for the workshop created a network of enthusiastic GPs who will assist and support each other with a variety of research projects – both as co-authors and co-participants.

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