

## REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

At its biennial meeting in Londrina, Brazil in October 2001, The Network: Community Partnerships for Health through Innovative Education, Service, and Research agreed in principle to integrate with WHO's Towards Unity for Health (TUFH) initiative, thus bringing together the relative strengths of each organization. In September 2001 the advisory committee of TUFH met in Barcelona, Spain to look at what has been accomplished and plan for the future. Described below is a brief synopsis of that meeting and where additional information about TUFH might be obtained.

### **Towards Unity for Health – Progress Report, Charles Boelen**

*Towards Unity for Health* (TUFH) is an approach to enhance the social responsiveness of health systems by creating a shared vision, a convergence of interest and sustainable partnerships among key stakeholders such as policy-makers, health managers, health professions, academic institutions and communities.<sup>1</sup>

The *Advisory Committee* (AC) of TUFH met in Barcelona (Spain) in September 2001, two years after the inaugural international conference held in Phuket (Thailand) on "Towards Unity for Health: Challenges and Opportunities for Partnership in Health Development", with the aim to assess progress achieved worldwide and discuss a strategic plan for further action research and dissemination. The AC is currently composed of 30 members representing the different stakeholders and components of the TUFH approach.

There was unanimous opinion that the achievements in such a short period of time have been outstanding and that the potential of TUFH as an approach to make the best use of talents and resources in the health system is tremendous.<sup>2</sup>

The achievements are grouped in the following five areas.

#### *TUFH Field Projects*

Twelve TUFH field projects have been selected on a competitive basis to conduct research development activities consistent with sets of TUFH criteria. A WHO contract and grant were provided against the submission of four progress reports, for the period 2001–2002 (two per year).

Progress reports will be circulated on a TUFH listserver and profiles of projects are accessible on the TUFH website.

Lessons learnt from field experiences will contribute to our knowledge base regarding most appropriate methodologies for securing sustainability in

institutional changes and creation of productive alliances among health partners, with the ultimate goal to improve quality, equity, relevance and cost-effectiveness in health services.

Another round of selection for field projects will take place in the near future to enlarge this initial world sample.

A TUFH field project working group coordinates this activity and plans to provide feedback and technical support to each field project manager.

Information can be obtained by contacting Jay Glasser (jglasser@sph.uth.tmc.edu).

### *TUFH Educational Project*

The observation was made that there was an important need for capacity building regarding the applications of the TUFH principles as the conventional educational programmes in public health or health management are not providing sufficient opportunities to acquire specific knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding the creation of a unity of action among important actors in the health system.

The proposal has been made to set up an educational programme to cover these learning needs, looking first at those involved or interested in the development of a TUFH field project. An educational planning document outlining a set of learning modules was discussed. The suggestion is to pioneer such a programme in a few universities through a collaborative process. A fellowship initiative could be further proposed to assist candidates eager to attend the programme.

A specific working group stimulates and monitors development in this area.

Information can be obtained by contacting Dr. Jaime Gofin (jaime@md2.huji.ac.il).

### *TUFH and Health Professions*

"Why and how should health professions in their practice milieu be interested by the TUFH concept and its implications?" is the question addressed by a specific working group. Family physicians and general practitioners have been the first ones among the health professions to be interested to envisage how they could play a more active role in integrating individual and community health activities, which is one of the main features to create "unity" in health.

WONCA (the World Organization of Family Doctors) convened an expert group in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, to examine the opportunities and challenges offered by TUFH for their profession and their capacities to adapt to evolving health systems worldwide. A copy of the proceedings can be obtained from WONCA (e-mail: ceo@wonca.com.sg) (website: <http://www.wonca.org>).

The working group on "TUFH and health professions" envisages facilitating similar consultations among nurses, social workers, medical specialists and other categories of health workers. More information can be obtained by contacting Ilse Hellemann (mobene@computerhaus.at).

### *Information Management*

The assumption is made that the TUFH approach and the unity among stakeholders with a view of integration of the health service delivery can only be secured if a comprehensive management of routine health information is installed for a given population, i.e. a health district. A proper information management system is seen as the "glue" that allows fair and appropriate decisions to be made to best protect the priority health needs of individuals and populations.

A TUFH working group dealing with this issue provides advisory services to set up and manage such a system. A network of experts and projects active in the area is also established (RHINO, an acronym for Routine Health Information Network).

Further information about RHINO can be obtained at: [The\\_Rhino@jsi.com](mailto:The_Rhino@jsi.com).

More information on TUFH's information management group can be obtained by contacting Theo Lippeveld ([tlippeveld@jsi.org](mailto:tlippeveld@jsi.org)).

### *Global Networking*

A website is in the process of being fully operational mid 2002, as the result of a collaboration between WHO and The Network: Community Partnerships for Health through Innovative Education, Service and Research.

This website will offer users a rich opportunity of being informed on basic features of the TUFH approach, and on current development of related methodologies and field work. International NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) concerned with health service organization, professional practice, education of health professionals and health development will be encouraged to share their experiences and their specific contributions to the TUFH approach.

It is hoped that this vast source of information will not only inspire individual users but also create joint ventures among several NGOs sharing similar views and complementing each other with their specific strengths for a more coherent and sustainable approach in health development worldwide.

More information can be obtained on the TUFH website, by contacting: [secretariat@network.unimaas.nl](mailto:secretariat@network.unimaas.nl).

The Network at its recent meeting in Londrina, Brazil also expressed an interest in collaborating with WONCA, an international organization of Family Medicine and General Practice Organizations whose president is Dr Michael Boland. Recently WONCA had a meeting in Durban, South Africa. Below are some of the details of that meeting.

### **WONCA's Meeting in Durban, South Africa – Participant, Arthur Kaufman**

About 1000 representatives from more than 50 countries met in Durban, South Africa where family doctors and general practitioners discussed the primary

care issues of education, practice and research. The meetings were a combination of keynote addresses and small group presentations. At the plenary sessions such varied topics as evidence-based medicine, human rights, and the role of Doctors in Caring for Prisoners in Apartheid South Africa were presented. The small group sessions clustered three or four front line research topics together on such issues as Early Outcomes of the British Primary Care Trusts, Violence Against Clinic Staff in a Primary Care Clinic, and The Preferred Place to Die – home or hospital for the Terminally Ill in Rural Kenya.

## **Notes**

1. A hardcopy or an electronic copy of the WHO working paper "Towards unity for health" can be obtained by contacting the WHO (bernasconis@who.ch).
2. To obtain a copy of the proceedings of the TUFH Advisory Committee meeting in Barcelona, please contact the WHO (clevestinej@who.ch).