

REPORT FROM TURKEY

EQuIP Meeting, Jerusalem, 04-06 June 2009

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- **Turkish Family Physicians Elected new TAHUD Representatives**

November 30, 2008 was the election day of Turkish family physicians for a new executive.



Out of around 2000 family physicians, 201 TAHUD members participated in the elections where Prof. Okay Başak was elected as the new president. The executive committee was constituted of the following: Dr. A. Volkan Arpacı Dr. Arzu Akalın, Dr. Arzu Uzuner, Dr. Yesim Uncu, Dr. Ziya T. Güneş, and Dr. Fisun Sözen.

Priority of the new executive was expressed as to preserve and improve the rights and positions of family physicians during the health transition project.

- **Federation of Family Physicians' Associations Established**

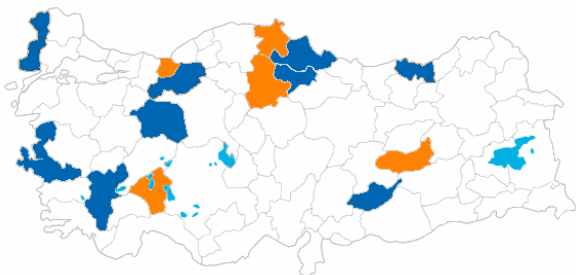
The health transition project is giving birth to new constitutions. Practitioners who made contract with the new health system are establishing their own organizations. Family physician* organizations from over 20 pilot cities joined recently under the umbrella of *Federation of Family Physicians*.



During the first executive meeting on 10th of January, 2009, Dr. Abdullah Okyay was elected as the executive president.

* We should remind about the name mismatch after the health transition project: both the board

certified family medicine specialists and the untrained practitioners are named as “family physicians”. Their certificates shall be valid until there are enough board certified family physicians in the country; similar to the “Grandfather Clause” in the history of USA.



(Graph representing some of the pilot cities)

• News from the Health Transition Project

Piloting of the health transition project is going on in 24 cities. Despite some critics regarding the lack of data from the pilot application, nationwide expansion of the project is expected by the end of 2009.



On the other hand, in June 2008, a protocol was signed by the Ministry of Health (coordinator Prof. Süleyman Görpelioğlu) and the Sakarya University (Rector Prof. Mehmet Durman) to conduct the phase II trainings. According to the agreement, around 25.000 untrained GPs will receive a long term training based on distant learning.

Another important development was the declaration of a deadline for the transition period. The ministry of health announced to a news agency that after **2017** enrollment of physicians without postgraduate training will be stopped.

After this deadline, board qualification will be a requirement in order to work in primary care.

• ICPC Trainings Started

The Ministry of Health took the initiative to implement ICPC coding in primary care. Trainings of the core trainers were done during August-September 2008.

Trainings are conducted all over the country targeting the more than 25 thousand practitioners and around the same number allied health staff.

Countrywide implementation is hoped to begin by the end of 2009.



• Upcoming Scientific Events

The following upcoming scientific activities supported by TAHUD are in the agenda of the Turkish Family Physicians:

- National family medicine days: 4-6 June 2009
- Rhinocamp meeting: 20-24 May 2009
- Kartal family medicine days: 7-10 May 2009
- Academic geriatrics conference: 20-24 May 2009

• Turkish Cabinet Revised: Minister of Health Reappointed

After the local municipality elections in March, the Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a revision in the cabinet. 19 members were

released from their positions including the minister of education. However Prof. Recep Akdağ, the minister of health preserved his place.

The health transition project is one of the most popular projects of Prof. Akdağ. Despite of some criticism from the doctors' side, the public seems to be happy with his activities.

- **Difficult Decision: Should Family Physicians be Gatekeepers?**

Family physicians are the central actors in most of the health systems worldwide. Also academic definitions define the family physician as the "chief of the orchestra".

Although "gate keeping" function is increasing the importance of family physicians and seemingly empower them, it is not a standard practice in developed countries.

As a result of long debates, decision was taken to implement gate keeping role of family physicians during the health transition project in Turkey.

A regulation for this purpose was put to action in November 2008 to start gate keeping in four pilot cities. Although this change lead to daily savings of 400.000 Turkish Liras (185.000 EUR) and a decrease in the patient load of hospitals, according to some figures, a second regulation issued on 1th of January 2009 postponed the implementation to July 2009.

Reasons for postponing of the gate keeping regulation were complains from both patient and doctors sides. The patients don't want to lose the freedom of using all available resources while family physicians started to complain of the increased patient load. Interestingly, even the hospital doctors were not happy with the situation; most probably due to a decrease in their fee for service incomes.

Time is passing fast and the next deadline is approaching. A difficult decision is waiting for the politicians: academic and economic benefits of gate keeping on one side – patient and doctor satisfaction on the other...

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