



# World Family Organization

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Saturday, April 18, 2009

## WFO preparing a partnership with U21 to develop projects on the health area specially in Latin America and Africa

The annual meeting of the Health Sciences group took place in Charlottesville, Virginia in mid-September (a full report will appear in a future publication) when nearly 100 health sciences professionals from a variety of disciplines attended the meeting at UVa. It was preceded by a two-day workshop looking at the work the Health Sciences group was carrying out in support of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. The workshop was convened by Dr Kendall Ho of UBC, who had also co-organised the 2007 Presidential Symposium on the same topic held at McGill University (see newsletter issue 9). There were representatives of organisations with which colleagues in Health Sciences were working, most notably AIFOMD (international foundation for educators in the MDG) and the World Family Organisation (WFO).

The workshop gave the opportunity to share existing good practices in MDG related activities as well as outline further opportunities for collaboration in this important area of global health. The meeting focused on the need for interdisciplinary and interprofessional working, recognising that although three of the eight goals could be identified as 'health-led', all of the goals had an element requiring or progressing improved health.

Of particular interest were the presentations by students from the University of Hong Kong, Tecnológico de Monterrey and the University of Queensland. Jerome So from HKU outlined a project he had worked on in Cameroon, part of a long-term relationship between the Medical School in Hong Kong and a town in the Anglophone part of Cameroon. Although the placement gave Jerome and his colleagues valuable medical experience, they were also able to see the social effects of ill health and the importance that housing played in improving health. Fernando Carreras, Alejandra Tellez and Rodrigo Zepeda from Mexico outlined the work that students from Tecnológico de Monterrey were carrying out, particularly in less-developed parts of that country. They had also worked on a web portal for staff and students of participating medical schools to share good practices in relation to MDG which had been developed in collaboration with colleagues from HKU and UBC, but driven from Mexico. Nancy Merridew from Queensland outlined the work that was being done there to raise awareness with medical students and faculty about the challenges and opportunities presented by the MDG; she emphasised the need to encourage the involvement of the whole community and stressed the benefits this brought to doctors-in-training.

Although the experiences showcased related to medical students, there was wide support for broadening the involvement of other health sciences professionals from the nurses, physiotherapists, dentists and others in the 30+ audience. At the end of the meeting, a plan of work was proposed which would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Health Sciences group, to be held at Korea University in 2009. This plan of action would be presented to the wider health sciences community for endorsement, and this group was committed to working with colleagues across the disciplines in the network.

This is not the last we have heard of this exciting initiative, student-driven and outreach-focused, so watch this space!

Jane Usherwood  
U21 Secretary General

Please click in the image below to access the October 2008 edition of the Universitas 21 newsletter.



Dr. Deisi Kusztra participated as a special invitee and speaker to the Universitas 21 Workshop on Global Partnership for Education and Implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals, held in Charlottesville, Virginia, USA on September 14 and 15, 2008.

Universitas 21 is an international network of 21 leading research-intensive universities in

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thirteen countries. Collectively, its members enroll over 650 000 students, employ over 130 000 staff and have over 2 million alumni. Their collective budgets amounts to over US\$ 13bn and has an annual research grant income of over US\$ 3bn.

The network's purpose is to facilitate collaboration and cooperation between the members Universities and to create opportunities for them on a scale that none of them would be able to achieve operating independently or through traditional bilateral alliances.

Dr. Deisi was invited by Dr. Kendall Ho, Associate Dean of Medicine, Director of the Division of Continuing Medical Education and Assistant Professor of the Faculty of Medicine of University of British Columbia, Canada, and will present the work done by the World Family Organization and Development Partners in the Health Sector.