



Press release

## **“Drawing points for general practitioners and health care sector in Slovakia following the XXXIV Prevention Annual Conference of Slovak Society of GP” held in Vysoke Tatry, 17-19 October 2013**

Slovak general practitioners met in their largest professional event under the theme: **“Prevention – the Shield of Health. General Practice – the Shield of Prevention”** in Stary and Stredny Smokovec on 17-19 October 2013.

**Essential statistics: there were 905 registered participants, of whom 692 were physicians, 118 were nurses, 10 were representatives of patient associations, and 85 were representatives of pharmaceutical companies. Five sections ran in parallel in which 208 presentations and workshops were offered. Presentations were given by 161 physicians, 9 of whom were international professors, by more than 60 general practitioners and 11 nurses. The event was supported by 35 pharmaceutical firms and 10 other partners.**

We organized our traditional community activities for physicians, nurses and the regional population: the “Run in Stockings” was held on Friday morning and “Healthy Cooking” was the focus of Friday afternoon.

The conference in autumn in Vysoke Tatry is traditionally organized by our professional society together with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Country Office in the Slovak Republic, the section of general practitioners of the Slovak Medical Chamber and repeatedly jointly with the Slovak Chamber of Nurses and Midwives along with support from the town of Vysoke Tatry. This year’s conference was supported by WHO (WHO/EURO), the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA), the European Forum for Primary Care (EFPC) and the Association for Protection of Patients’ Rights (AOPP).

Our conference was also supported with the participation of MUDr. Darina Sedláková, the Head of the WHO Country Office, Professor MUDr. Peter Krištúfek, President of the Slovak Medical Association, and MUDr. Marian Kollár, President of the Slovak Medical Chamber. The Ministry of Health was represented by its chief expert for family medicine, MUDr. Monika Palušková, who supports plans for prevention and development of education of general practitioners, and told the plenary about the importance of having sufficient funding earmarked not only for specific projects but also for general health care in next year’s budget.

The main theme of this year’s conference was **“Prevention – the Shield of Health. General Practice – the Shield of Prevention.”** This pressing theme was discussed at the foot of the majestic peaks of Vysoke Tatry in a country whose priority should be urgently addressing the unfavourable status of the health care sector. All patients have a general practitioner and all patients should realize that there is a safeguard for their health, namely a preventive check by their general practitioner once every two years. A medical check maps out an individual risk profile and what should follow is the individual’s responsibility in issues such as quitting smoking, improving one’s eating habits, and regular exercise.

WHO presented evidence that a good relationship between a patient and his or her chosen general practitioner over many years is associated with better care, better health condition, better quality of life combined with much lower cost and better equality in health care. Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General, recently mentioned that aspect at the XX World Congress of the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) in Prague in June 2013 where she gave the keynote address and was the lead promoter of primary care as human medicine:

**“Primary care is our best hope for the future. Family doctors are our rising stars for the future. Out of the ashes built up by highly-specialized, dehumanized, and commercialized medical care, family medicine rises like a phoenix and takes flight, spreading its comprehensive spectrum of light, with the promise of a rainbow. This is the ancient historical covenant between doctors and patients, and this is where the health and medical professions need to return. I encourage all of you to continue to cultivate the human side of medicine.”**



The complete address by the WHO Director-General was presented at the start of our conference and laid out the nature of the conference representing modern human medicine.

Professor Iona Heath, the former President of the Royal College of General Practitioners and a committee member of WONCA for many years, and Professor Mateja Bulc, the president of EUROPREV, were key international guests at the conference. EUROPREV is a WONCA European organization which organizes prevention-focused projects. WONCA is the World Organization of Family Doctors and it currently it associates 118 member organizations and represents more than 300,000 general practitioners/family doctors in 102 countries. We feel strong support from doctors from across the world through the support of WONCA and WHO for our efforts in Slovakia.

In modern times **“Prevention has become problematic. The root causes of chronic diseases reside in non-health sectors. They are profoundly shaped by the products and marketing practices of the tobacco, food, beverage, and alcohol industries.”** (Margaret Chan). That is why an active attitude by each individual towards her or his health has become ever more important now, especially when it comes to tapping the potential of eliminating bad habits such as smoking and drinking, adopting healthy eating habits, and exercising. Now that our state prefers individual benefit to public benefit, people can achieve their optimum condition only if they keep an eye on themselves regarding important issues related to health. And this is where general practitioners, offering their services to all individuals and families, play a decisive role in providing information about health status and giving recommendations on important changes in lifestyle that are necessary to stay healthy.

Our professional association now has more than 1,400 members. We implement the objectives of the World Health Organizations under our Constitution. Our association is a member of WONCA and EFPC (European Forum for Primary Care) and we comply with the decisions of their committees. For that reason, we have been organizing prevention-focused projects independently from the state that are aimed at improvement in the health of the Slovak population. These projects include Healthy Vein Days, Heart Days, Healthy Heart to Combat Diabetes Days, Healthy Digestion Days, Good Back Days and more. Thousands of patients and their general practitioners and nurses participated in these projects in recent years.

This is the spirit we seek to maintain to keep progressing in our effort in developing integrated primary health care in Slovakia.

Our recently concluded conference has indicated that the healthy future of Slovak citizens dwells in integration of the endeavours of physicians, nurses and patients. Our perception is that politicians who want to rule over us attempt to sow conflicts among us. Our conference reiterated that physicians, nurses, patients and pharmaceutical companies can be the strongest allies. Our role is to develop this alliance for the sake of accomplishing our plans for better health of the people of Slovakia.

Distinguished Slovak journalists, thank you for your cooperation and support. We must all participate in building an efficient health care system based on people's needs.

Bratislava: 22 October 2013

MUDr. Peter Makara, President; MUDr. Peter Pekarovič, Scientific Secretary; MUDr. Eva Berešová, Chair of the Organizing Committee of the XXXIV Prevention Annual Conference; MUDr. Peter Lipták, Secretariat Director SSVPL SLS and chair of the Organizing Committee of the XXXIV Prevention Annual Conference SSVPL SLS.

Internet site of the XXXIV Prevention Annual Conference:

<http://www.vpl.sk/sk/xxxiv-preventivna-vyrocná-konferencia-ssvpl-sls/>