**MINERVA: Combined Residency and Research Training Programs**

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**Background**

MINERVA stands for **M**ontreal **IN**itiative pour l’**E**ducation et **R**echerche **V**ocationale **A**cadémique. It is an acronym that represents a group of academic family physicians and trainees committed to exploring and promoting the role of combined vocational and research training to build research capacity and leadership in primary care.

In an effort to accentuate the value of primary health care as a prerequisite for good quality, affordable and humane (inter)national health care the World Health Organization declared 2009 to be the year of Primary Health Care. Numerous declarations and studies support the WHO claim that primary care should be the cornerstone of any health care system.

This claim can only be accounted for when primary health care is of sufficient quality: effective, efficient and safe. To produce and maintain a high level of quality, continuous input of primary care based research is essential. This research needs to be oriented to primary care populations and to address aspects unique for primary care like the integration of medical, psychological, social and behavioral sciences.

Although research in primary care has developed strongly and consistently in the last decades, compared to other specialties research capacity is still modest. While building academic practice based research networks is one way to improve research capacity, promotion of a combined residency and research training program is yet another. Combined training programs invest in relatively young people who can implement their acquired skills throughout the major part of their career. In addition, with combined training the valuable translation from practice to research and vice versa becomes a quality inherent in clinician researchers who have finished their combined program.

**History**

*First meeting*

The initiative developed from a **discussion group** conducted during the 2008 North American Primary Care Research Group (NAPCRG) annual meeting in Puerto Rico. These discussions highlighted the need for combined residency and research family practice training programmes to stimulate and enable primary care research and built future leadership in this area. In addition, it was noted that several combined programmes already existed in different formats in several countries providing an opportunity for experiences of these to be explored.

*Second meeting*

The first meeting resulted in the formation of MINERVA and a commitment to further explore and promote combined vocational and research training programmes. A preliminary workshop to this effect was held at the 2009 WONCA Europe conference in Basel, Switzerland and a subsequent forum was held at the 2009 NAPCRG conference in Montréal, Canada. During this forum the outline of the existing combined programs in the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and The Netherlands were presented and a SWOTA analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Treats and Action analysis) of these combined programs was performed. After this forum **six universities agreed to support the MINERVA initiative**: The University of Auckland (Prof. Bruce Aroll, Felicity Goodyear-Smith), University of Liverpool (Prof. Chris Dowrick), Dalhousie University (Bo Miedema), The University of Melbourne (Prof. Jane Gunn), University of Southampton (Prof. Tony Kendrick) and Radboud University Nijmegen Medical Centre (Prof. Chris van Weel).

*Third meeting*

A third meeting took place in 2011 at NAPCRG in Banff, Canada. During this second MINERVA forum examples of combined programs in Australia and New Zealand were highlighted and research coming from the combined programs in the Netherlands and the UK were presented. During a brainstorm session participants discussed how to proceed with MINERVA. As a result of this second meeting the **Special Interest Group (SIG) “MINERVA: Combined Residency and Research Training Programs” started** in NAPCRG. Furthermore, the MINERVA initiative was **linked to the WONCA Working Party on Research.**

**Goals**

* to explore existing combined residency and research training programs internationally
* to promote the construction of combined residency and research training programs internationally
* to evaluate existing combined residency and research training programs (output, results, barriers, etc.)
* to create a network of residents and research leaders participating in combined residency and research training programs internationally

**Future plans**

The MINERVA initiative aims at an annual meeting during NAPCRG in order to discuss the goals and future plans. During the third meeting the following priorities were set:

1. To create a website of MINERVA (possibly by a link at the WONCA of NAPCRG website)
2. To ask NAPCRG for a session where residents in the combined programs get the opportunity to present their research
3. To formalize MINERVA’s Mission Statement and Objectives
4. To evaluate the existing combined programs
5. To make stakeholders aware of published papers about the combined programs
6. To link / contact the MINERVA initiative to the Brisbane initiative, Vasco da Gama Movement (WONCA Europe working group for new and future General Practitioners), The Rajakumar Movement (WONCA Asia-Pacific region working party for young and future Family Doctors)

**Country representatives**

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