



Dear Colleague

EURIPA (European Rural and Isolated Practitioners Association) was formed in Palma, Mallorca in the Spring of 1997. It has developed as an effective network, representing rural practitioners across Europe. EURIPA has succeeded in raising the profile of rural health and development of academic rural health centres in Europe.

Rural GPs often work at the periphery of health care systems. Evidence shows that they take on a wider range of activities as part of their everyday work. Peripherality means that patients and professionals may have difficulty engaging with secondary and tertiary care leading to problems of access, isolation and disenfranchisement.

Despite the efforts of EURIPA much work still needs to be done to promote rural health and rural practice across Europe.

As a consequence, EURIPA is hosting a European Invitational Forum in Rural Health, which will bring important rural stakeholders together from across Europe in order to share ideas and good practice and develop a pan-European Rural Health Strategy for the 21st century. Significant threats exist for rural communities and rural health care and there needs to be a strategy to cope with them.

The Forum's aims will include:

- Development of a Rural Health Strategy for Europe
- Forge links across Europe between rural practitioners, academic departments, academicians and national colleges and associations
- Create networks
- Share good practice
- Extend the scope and influence of EURIPA
- Identify key individuals and groups who are not yet involved with European rural health
- Develop links with other rural health organisations e.g. IAAMRH etc
- Learn from experiences outside Europe

The meeting will explore 4 central themes mirroring those of WONCA Europe:

- Research
- Education and training
- Quality in practice
- Engagement in the policy process

EURIPA's aim is to keep the size of the Forum manageable as this will make it a cohesive event able to reach decisions. It will be a European event and EURIPA is hoping for delegates from across the continent by inviting 2-3 key individuals from each country. However, places will be limited so please register your interest by responding to the email.

We do not have any significant funding and as a result we are asking all the delegates, including the organisers, to look for their own funding and as a result we have kept the costs as low as possible.

Please work with us to make this venture a success and identify 2-3 delegates from your country who could join us for this important Forum.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal tail extending to the right.

Jose M López-Abuin & John Wynn-Jones
Chairs of the EURIPA Invitational Forum