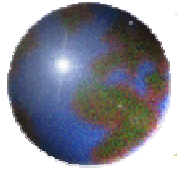


PRIMARY CARE IN EUROPE

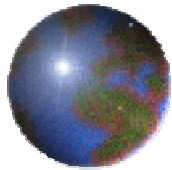
Prof. Igor Švab, MD, PhD, FRCGP
President WONCA Europe



Situations when I have made a complete fool of myself

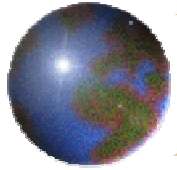
- ✦ Trying to impress a girl with a poem I have written
- ✦ Singing in public
- ✦ Telling a bad joke

- ✦ Speaking about primary care after Barbara Starfield?



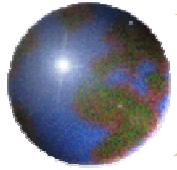
WHAT IS EUROPE?





EUROPEAN PROBLEMS

- ⊕ Huge diversity
- ⊕ A lot of changes
- ⊕ Need for cooperation

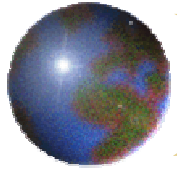


INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

✦ WONCA

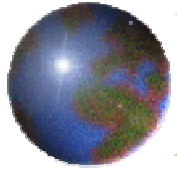
✦ UEMO





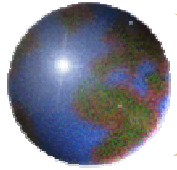
WHAT CAN THEY DO?

- ✦ Exchange of knowledge (congresses, journal etc.)
- ✦ Work with other organisations (WHO, EU)
- ✦ Advocacy of the discipline on the international level
- ✦ Promotion and support of national colleges



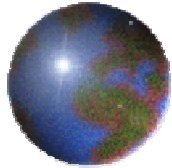
Usual complaints from primary care

- ✦ **Injustice:** we are not properly recognised, we can not publish or get research funds due to unjust criteria, we can not reach decision makers
- ✦ **Stupidity of others:** Nobody understands us, our discipline is complex and difficult

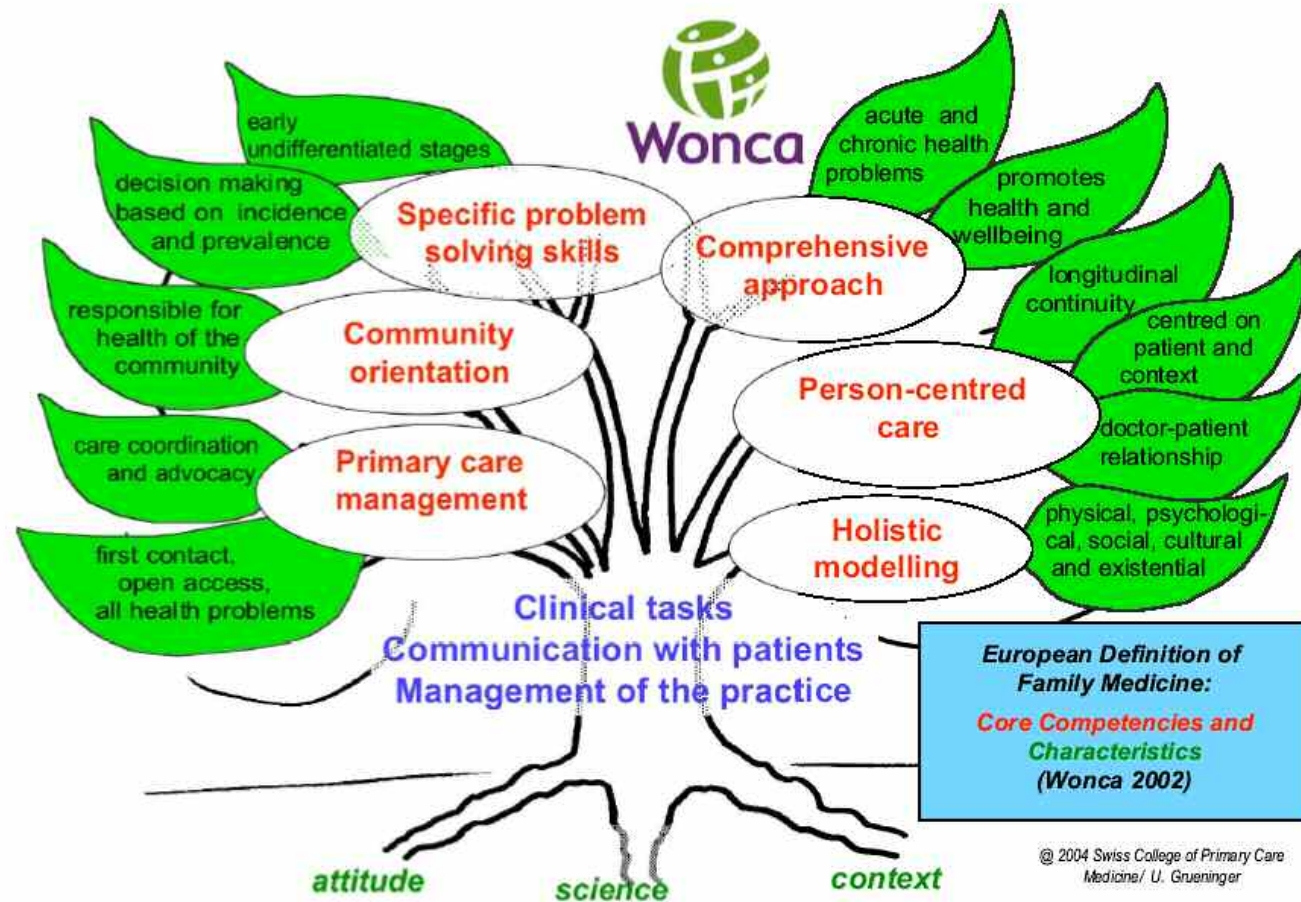


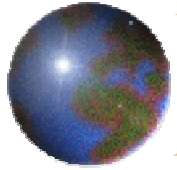
The usual strategy

- ✦ Family medicine is different from other disciplines
- ✦ Defining boundaries around the discipline is important
- ✦ Describing the discipline in its complexity is important in order to be understood
- ✦ We must protect ourselves

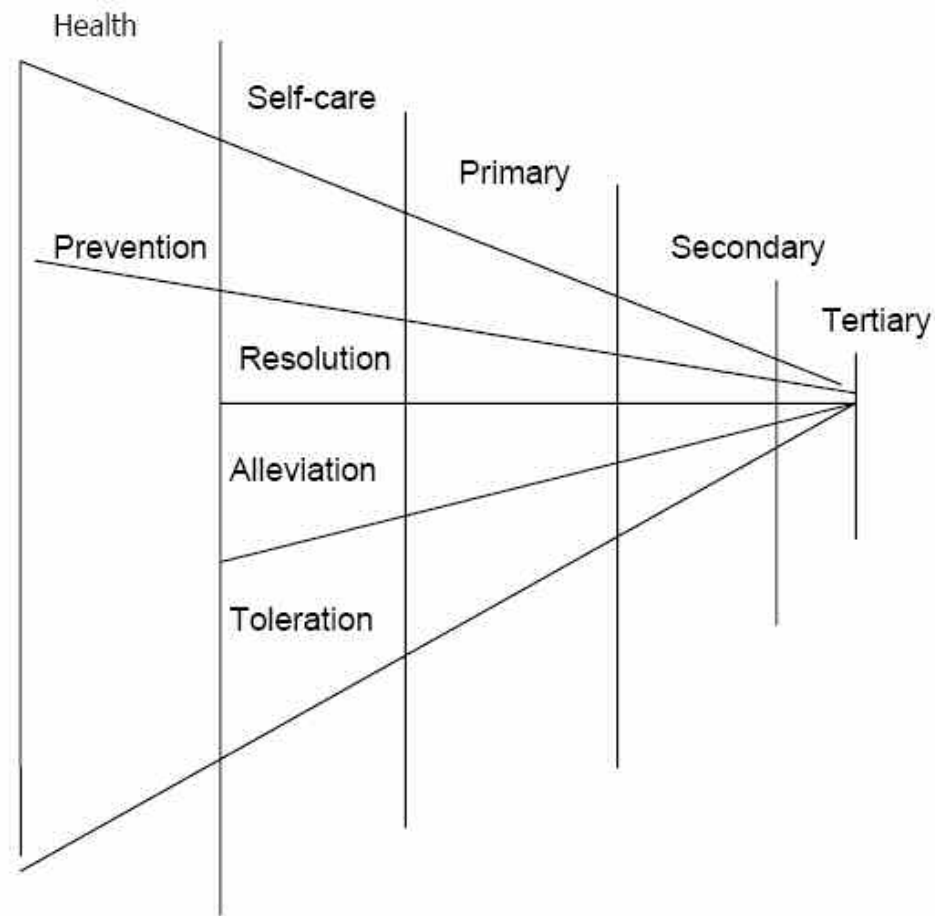


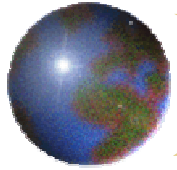
Result 1: The definition



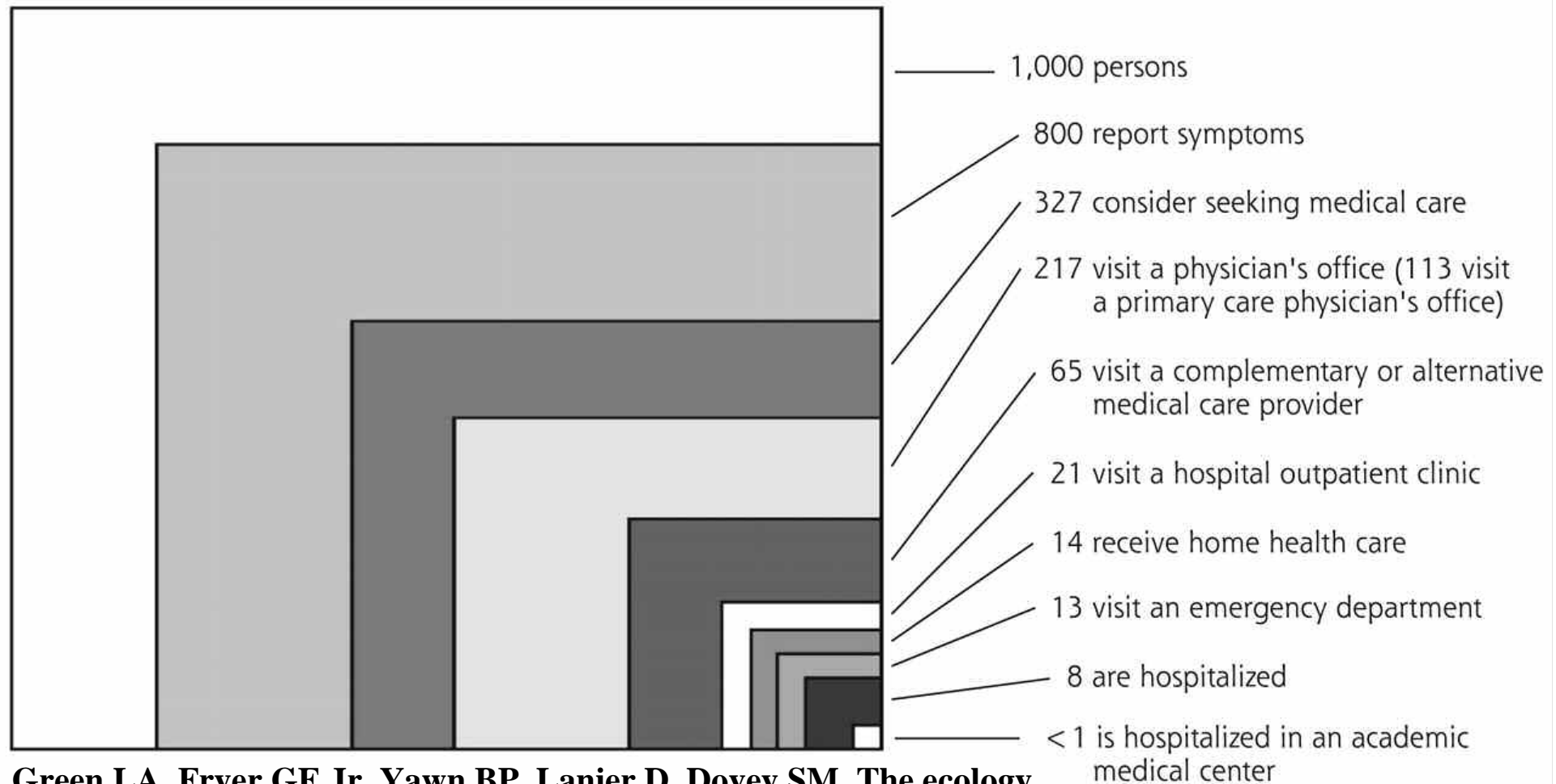


Result 2: defining boundaries

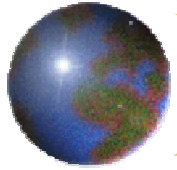




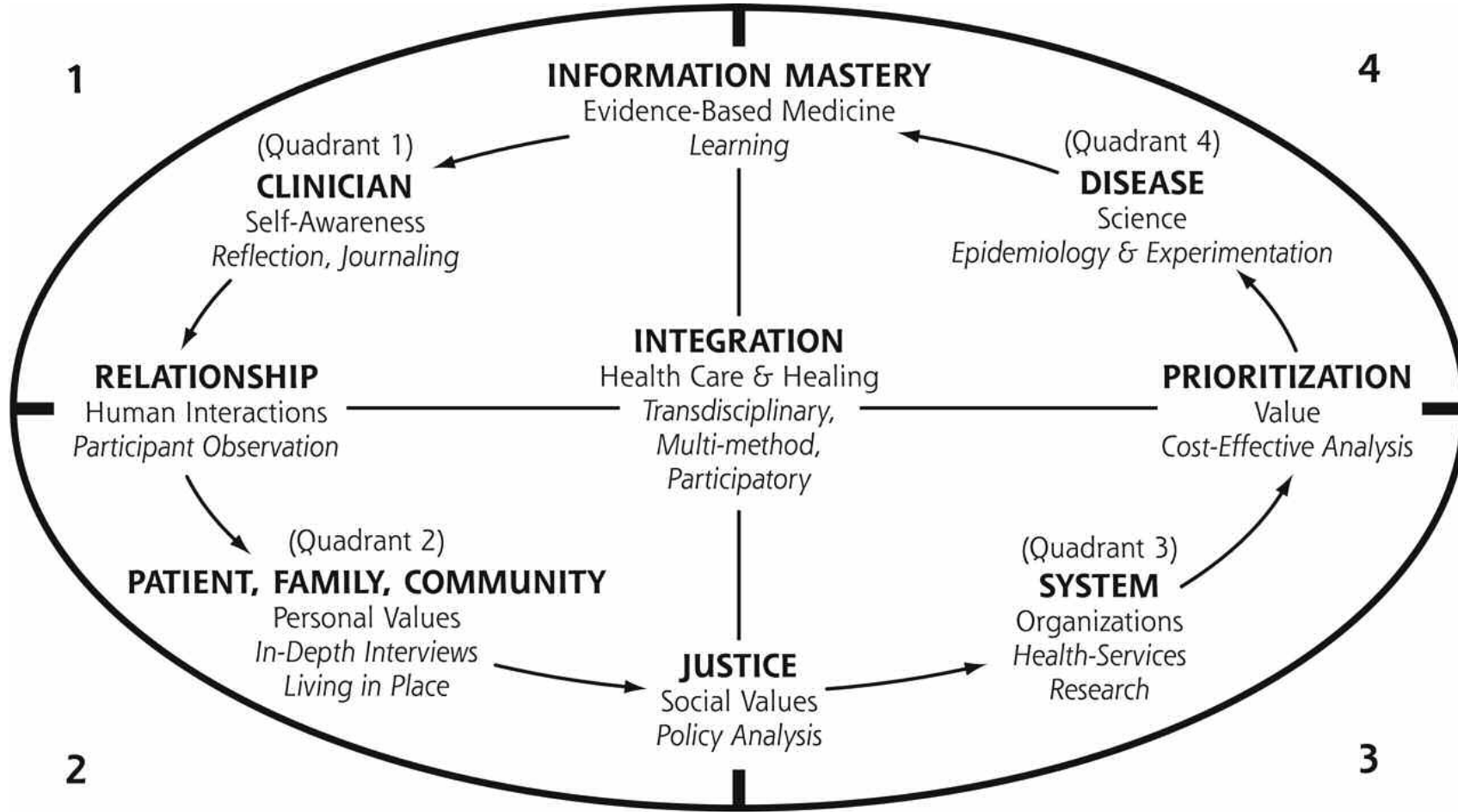
Result 3: epidemiology



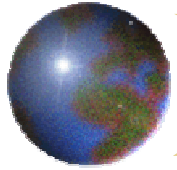
Green LA, Fryer GE Jr, Yawn BP, Lanier D, Dovey SM. The ecology of medical care revisited. *N Engl J Med.* 2001;344:2021–2025.



Result 4: Skills



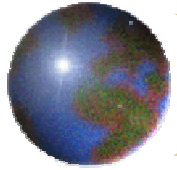
Green LA. The Research Domain of Family Medicine. Ann Fam Med 2004 2: S23-S29.



TIMES HAVE CHANGED

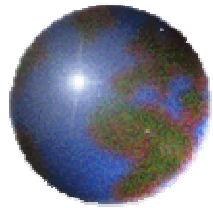
If primary care has anything at all to do with improving health, then its contribution will be measurable. If not, it will be accepted as the homeopathy of modern medicine.

Horton R. Is primary-care research a lost cause? Lancet 2003, 361: 977

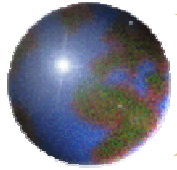


THE EVIDENCE

- ✦ The strength of a country's primary care system is associated with **improved population health outcomes**
- ✦ Health systems with a strong primary care orientation tend to be **more equitable and accessible**
- ✦ Using primary care physicians **reduces costs and increases patient satisfaction with no adverse effects on patient outcomes**

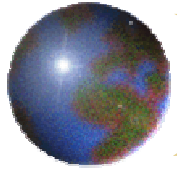


PRIMARY CARE WORKS!



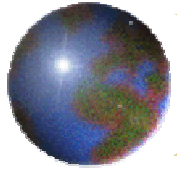
SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL COUNTRIES

- ✦ Strong professional organisations
- ✦ Shared responsibility for policy
- ✦ Professional dedication to quality of care
- ✦ Strong academic position (education, research)
- ✦ Good public image



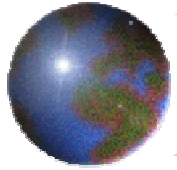
SUGGESTED REVISIONS (1)

- ✚ Family medicine is different from other disciplines
- ✚ Family medicine is one of the many disciplines in medicine.
- ✚ It deserves equal rights in terms of training, research funding, publishing, participation in policy decisions etc.



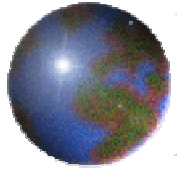
SUGGESTED REVISIONS (2)

- ✦ Defining boundaries around the discipline is important
- ✦ Defining boundaries is difficult and sometimes problematic in a multidisciplinary system.
- ✦ Focusing on cooperation with other disciplines is a more productive strategy.



SUGGESTED REVISIONS (3)

- ✦ Describing the discipline in its complexity is important in order to be understood
- ✦ Models are often useful in the early stages of academic development of the discipline.
- ✦ Creating models is an intellectual challenge that can lead to sterile discussions.
- ✦ There can be too much theory.
- ✦ Concentrating on practical achievements is a better strategy.



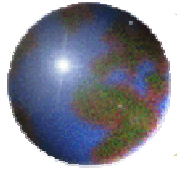
SUGGESTED REVISIONS (4)

- ✦ We must protect ourselves

- ✦ We must think about users.

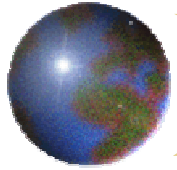
- ✦ Blaming others will do little to win the hearts and minds of sceptics.

- ✦ Family medicine is important because of its impact on health.



NEW CHALLENGES

- ✦ Can we learn from successful countries?
- ✦ Can we adequately research changes?
- ✦ Can we get comparable data on primary care performance?



PRIMARY CARE WORKS... WHY DOESN'T IT RULE?

- ✚ There is enough evidence that family medicine is the answer for many problems ...
- ✚ ..but it needs resources and support
- ✚ European cooperation can be one of the tools for improvement in the future

