

WONCA RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE



Ireland has one of the highest rural-based populations in Europe with a million people living rurally and another million people living in small towns and villages. These figures appear to be on the increase as the new working arrangements triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic have given many people new opportunities to live outside our major urban centres. This reverse of the depopulation of rural communities has also been triggered by the resilience of rural communities seen during the challenges of COVID-19 where generally lower levels of infection were seen.

“The resilience shown by rural and remote communities has been a testament to their inherent engagement, cohesiveness and flexibility. The COVID-19 pandemic has generated renewed vigour in re-imagining life on the periphery as a very attractive place for people and businesses to come, work and live,” said Professor Liam Glynn, chair of the organising committee for the WONCA World Rural Health Conference which is coming to Ireland for the first time and will take place on the University of Limerick parkland campus in Ireland’s Mid-West.

The Irish College of General Practitioners, the University of Limerick School of Medicine, and the Rural, Island and Dispensing Doctors of Ireland, are hosting the conference in a unique joint partnership which now has an extensive list of collaborating organisations including WONCA, the World Organization of Family Doctors,

the Scottish Graduate Entry Medical Programme (ScotGEM); EURIPA; the National Centre for Rural and Remote Medicine (UK); HRB Primary Care Clinical Trials Network Ireland; the Association of University Departments of General Practice in Ireland (AUDGPI), and the Rural and Remote Health Journal.

“We believe passionately that by people coming together and working together and sharing ideas, we can change attitudes, lives, health and ultimately, the world. The 2022 World Rural Health Conference will provide a unique crossroads for a diverse community of GPs, Practice nurses, students, researchers, policy makers, health managers, creators and educators which will translate into positive and resilient change for the health of communities,” said Dr Diarmuid Quinlan, Medical Director of the Irish College of General Practitioners.

“Our theme, ‘Improving Health, Empowering Communities’ will explore how communities can be empowered to improve their own health and the health of those around them. We hope to do this by hearing from 1000+ participants from all over the world in various sectors, including Health, Science, Engineering, the Arts, and NGOs of all shapes and sizes. This action-oriented conference is intended to foster a high level of meaningful dialogue and cooperation amongst stakeholders,” asserted Dr John Wynn-Jones, a renowned global GP leader who chairs the Conference International Advisory Group.

Members of the group come from every corner of the world, in order to make sure the conference has a truly international flavour.

Rural communities across the globe continue to be challenged by the limited supply of high-quality rural healthcare professionals and leaders. A key outcome for this conference will be an enhanced understanding of, and commitment to, student and early-career healthcare professionals who are interested in living and working in rural areas. *"If young doctors and nurses are not supported to have vibrant and viable careers in rural areas, those same areas will become even more vulnerable. This is a critical issue for those communities and this conference provides a unique opportunity for stakeholders, leaders and international experts to find solutions,"* said Dr Robert Scully, Deputy Director of ScotGEM and chair of the student and young doctor sub-committee for the conference.

"Rural healthcare is at the heart of this conference but it is clear that themes about educating our future healthcare leaders, the environment, the role of the Irish practice nurse, pre-hospital care, Indigenous, migrant and refugee healthcare, and the role of universities will resonate with most of us whether you live or work in a city, large or small town. We all work to serve our local communities which is the central focus of our conference theme," said Dr Jerry Cowley, chairman of the Rural, Island and Dispensing Doctors of Ireland.

The conference organisers welcome any and all participation and look forward to hearing from you in the weeks and months ahead and most of all look forward to welcoming you to Limerick in 2022. Please email registrationWRHC2022@ul.ie with any queries or go to the link below or click on the barcode to access the conference website:

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