WONCA Asia Pacific Region (APR) Council statement on "Strengthening Primary Care and Supporting the Medical Community in Korea"

4 May 2025

The WONCA Asia Pacific Regional (APR) Council, representing family doctors across the Asia-Pacific region. We stand with our colleagues in the Republic of Korea in seeking to strengthen Primary care in this time of reform, and all countries of the world.

Family doctors are the backbone of strong, resilient, and equitable health systems. As the first point of contact in healthcare, they provide comprehensive, continuous, and person-centered care across the lifespan. The value of Primary Care, anchored by the discipline of family medicine, is proven in improving health outcomes, reducing costs, and promoting health equity.(1)

We recognize the indispensable contributions of all healthcare professionals. Preventive, longitudinal, and community-oriented services led by family doctors, are essential components of a robust health system.

The WONCA APR Council calls on governments and health system leaders across the region, and especially in the Republic of Korea, to adopt and implement policies that strengthen and invest in Primary Care. A well-supported family medicine workforce is critical to national health security, pandemic preparedness, and the achievement of Universal Health Coverage.

We express our deep concern over the current tensions between the medical community and the government in Korea. We urge all parties to engage in open, respectful dialogue with the shared goal of building a stronger, more integrated Primary Care system to better serve the Korean people.

(1) Starfield B. Is Primary Care essential? Lancet. 1994;344(8930):1129-1133. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(94)90633-40