

**Regional Meeting of Faculties of Medicine's Deans
Banja Luka, The Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
21-22 March 2024**

**The Banja Luka Declaration
of Strengthening Family Medicine in Higher Medical Education**

Acknowledging the health problems that affect the population of our countries, with noncommunicable diseases being most prominent.

Understanding that many of these health problems require multidisciplinary and lifelong management.

Further understanding that promoting healthy lifestyles, immunization and screening for early disease manifestations can reduce the overall disease burden.

Highlighting the importance of universal health coverage which underpins solutions towards achieving the health-related sustainable development goals, as described in the document "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

Referring to policy and technical guidance provided by the World Health Organization, including the Tallinn Charter: Health Systems for Health and Wealth (2008), the Astana Declaration following the Global Conference on Primary Health Care (2018), the Bucharest Declaration on the Health and Care Workforce emanating from the High-Level Regional Meeting on Health and Care Workforce in Europe: Time to Act (2023).

Also referring to the Resolution passed by the WHO Regional Committee for Europe during its seventy-first meeting, titled "Realizing the potential of primary health care: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and implications for future directions in the WHO European Region.

Cognizant of the fact that primary health care systems are well suited for health promotion, disease prevention, and certain provisions of chronic health care.

We, the undersigned deans of medical faculties, acknowledge and agree that family medicine is an independent medical specialty, with its own specific competencies, quality standards and research area. It also has its specific academic contribution.

We understand the significance of family medicine as the cornerstone of healthcare systems and believe that a strong foundation in family medicine is vital for thriving of healthcare systems. It is our conviction that family medicine should receive equal recognition alongside other medical disciplines, and be esteemed as a scientific and academic discipline with its unique approaches to undergraduate and postgraduate training and research.

Considering the long-standing tradition of excellent primary health care within this field in our region, we are committed to enhancing its progress. Therefore, we have collectively decided to issue a statement that promotes the importance of family medicine as an academic discipline and has the potential of actively supporting the academic development of our faculties. In pursuit of these goals, we will undertake the following initiatives:

- Enhance international collaboration among institutions, fostering a global challenge of knowledge and best practices.
- Foster research initiatives in family medicine at both national and international levels, by developing research protocols and supporting innovative projects.
- Mutually support each other in providing mentorship for academic development, including PhD programmes.
- Facilitate the exchange of teachers and students, promoting interdisciplinary learning and enhancing exchange of ideas on all levels of studies.
- Support one another in policy dialogues, providing our collective expertise to policymakers to shape healthcare policies effectively.

We aspire that this statement serves as an inspiration to others, particularly policymakers, who play a crucial role in this field. By recognizing and prioritizing family medicine, we can help in building a robust healthcare system that meets the needs of individuals as well as communities, promoting better health outcomes for all.

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