

Wonca's smallest, most remote meeting

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WONCA's smallest, most remote meeting took place on the tiny Island of Berneray (pop. 130), one km from the coast of North Uist (pop. 1 350), in the remote Western Isles of Scotland. I have been born and bred in North Uist and returned in 1972 to succeed my parents in the NHS practice, which was based in North Uist and also covered Berneray, where there was a resident Community Nurse. From its foundation in 1992, I had been a member of the WONCA Working Party on Rural Practice, and the idea for the meeting arose from some of my colleagues

wishing to come to the island after the 15th WONCA in Dublin.

Three came

In the end, as so often happens, several of them were not able to take the extra time from work, but three managed to come. They crossed from Ireland to Scotland, made their way through Glasgow and Fort William, crossed to Sky via the elegant new bridge and then caught a ferry for the two-hour crossing to North Uist.

They spent a night in Lochmaddy and then drove 15km to catch the small ferry to Berneray.

HIV and alcohol

There they joined the Practice staff and other area health professionals who have worked closely with us for years. It was a day of information exchange with Professor Roger Strasser (Chairman of the Rural Working Party) giving his first face-to-face address in the UK, Nick Ndebele from Zimbabwe drawing us in to the horrific details of the extent of HIV infection in his country, and Kaj Kallsberg from the Faroe Islands explaining their problems with excess alcohol consumption. From the Islands, Dr Ian Clark (our area Psychiatrist and previous GP regis-

trar in the practice) was joined by John Maclean (Community Psychiatric Nurse) and Ian Macaulay (Deputy Director of Social work) gave a session on our alcohol problems and the prevention techniques that are in vogue.

Patient experiences

A patient from Berneray gave an account of her experience of having a stroke and how it had affected her. Mary Maclean (Berneray nurse), who had looked after the patient, was joined by Caroline Rusk, (nurse on the similar island of Eriskay) to tell us how it felt to be in clinical command in such an isolated situation.

Posters and prawns

In addition to the discussion, there were several posters for the audience to scan.

The student log, where the 105 worldwide students and 30 school pupils (job experience in the Consulting Room) have written accounts of their visits, attracted a lot of interest. One of the Practice dispensers was there and she was able to give an account of her work.

Locally caught lobster, crab and prawn were prepared by local ladies and a lunch was a fine feast.



Nick Ndebele (Zimbabwe), Kaj Kallsberg (Faroe), John A J Macleod (Scotland), Roger Strasser (Australia)

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