

# **The Medical Network for Social Reconstruction in the Former Yugoslavia**

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*Health is valued by everyone. It provides a basis for bringing people together to analyse, to discuss and to arrive at a consensus acceptable to all. The potential for using health as a mechanism for dialogue, and even peace, has been demonstrated in situations of conflict.*

*World Health Organization, 1995*

## **Mission Statement**

The Medical Network for Social Reconstruction in the Former Yugoslavia (Medical Network) is a network of health-care providers drawn from all parts of the former Yugoslavia. Through the Medical Network, hundreds of health-care providers— including physicians, psychologists, university professors, teachers, volunteers and local and national government health-related ministers—work together, across disciplines and across borders, to improve the health of the community and the region.

The Medical Network is dedicated to facilitating healing and recovery processes that promote individual and community health and empowerment as well as the prevention of future conflicts in its region. It is founded upon two major beliefs. First, violent conflict and war are the ultimate threat to public health. Second, the health community has a unique and crucial role to play in promoting a healthy society, not only by mending the physical and psychological wounds of individuals but also by rebuilding structures for public health care and creating bridges for community reconstruction and social reconciliation. To these ends, the Medical Network aims to promote dialogue, cooperation, personal contacts, practical solutions and the renewal of relationships in the region of the former Yugoslavia.

## **Origins of the Medical Network**

The Medical Network has evolved from its origins in 1991, when a small group met sporadically in conjunction with meetings of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). Since 1993, it has convened annual meetings and has organized projects and training programs for health-care professionals and medical students. Even during periods of extreme violence in the region, the Medical Network has orchestrated broad-based participation and has brought together polarized parties.

It was officially established in its present form in April 1997 at a conference in Graz, Austria. Since then, it has convened five international conferences: April 1998, in Sarajevo, Bosnia; May 1999, in Ohrid, Macedonia; May 2000, in Gracanica, Bosnia; June 2001, in Neum, Bosnia, and June 2002 in Igalo, Montenegro. In June

2003, an international conference is planned to take place in Rijeka, Croatia, to address “Violence, Mental Health and Society”. The conferences bring together health professionals from all parts of the former Yugoslavia and from around the world, providing opportunities for professional exchange, training and organizational development of the Medical Network.

### **Goals of the Medical Network**

The first goal of the Medical Network is to facilitate and perform inter- and intra- regional collaborative projects (involving two or more members, associates or affiliates of the Network) that encourage sustainable programs for promotion of medical, psychological and social well being and development.

The second goal is to provide a framework for ongoing productive communication among health professionals (broadly defined) within the former Yugoslavia and also beyond the region.

### **Guiding Principles for the Medical Network**

1. Promote interregional cooperation and the reconstruction of professional relationships through mutually-empowering, action-oriented programs.
2. Work in a manner that is culturally sensitive and adapted to the social context and the current situation.
3. Work for recovery and well-being of the individual and the community.
4. Meet especially the needs that are not being met by other organizations (e.g., assisting remote and/or under-served localities).
5. Mobilize resources in communities and develop sustainable programs.
6. Engage in multisectoral cooperation with a wide range of professional groups (e.g., medical, psychological, social welfare and educational).
7. Facilitate the productive exchange of experiences and professional expertise (a) within the region of former Yugoslavia and (b) between former Yugoslavia and other regions.
8. Enhance awareness of the international community to the issues and needs in the region.
9. Respect and promote high ethical and professional standards of work.
10. Recognize that different strategies are needed within each region to reach Network-stated goals.

### **Programs of the Medical Network**

The Medical Network runs periodic training workshops, conducts a range of inter-communal health-care projects, and convenes annual international conferences. The Medical Network's collaborative programs cover a range of content areas, including:

- health care and social reconstruction;
- programs for youth and adolescents;
- refugees and resettlement;
- professional training in trauma treatment, help to helpers and other community-based psychosocial programs;
- support of local program development, implementation and evaluation;
- development of capabilities within civil society through voluntary action programs; and

- professional training in conflict management, coexistence and community reconciliation.

The Medical Network has also reached out to physicians from other war-devastated or socially-depressed areas, including neighboring areas in the Balkans, the North Caucasus and the Middle East.

The Medical Network publishes reports and newsletters containing information about Medical Network literature and other resources, needs and capabilities throughout the region, and Medical Network conferences, workshops and meetings.

The Medical Network enjoys cooperative relationships with international medical organizations, including the World Health Organization, the International Society for Health and Human Rights, CARE, UNICEF, and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW).

### **Organization of the Medical Network**

The Medical Network functions through a "Contact Group" composed of representatives from different geopolitical points throughout the former Yugoslavia. The Contact Group meets every six months, has email and fax communication on a regular basis, and leads the Network as it engages in cooperative medical projects that cross conflict lines.

### **Support of the Medical Network**

Grants and donations from a range of sources—international and indigenous, government and private—have supported the work of the Medical Network.

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>MEDICAL NETWORK EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,<br/>CONTACT INFORMATION</b></p> |
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## Contact Group Membership (as of December 2002)

### ***Regional Representatives***

Anica Mikus Kos (Slovenia: Ljubljana) of the Together Center  
Tatjana Simovic (South Serbia: Krusevac) of the ELIXIR organization  
Slobodanka Stankovic (Vojvodina: Novi Sad) of Centar SRCE  
Lulezim Arapi (Kosovo: Ferizaj) of the Centre for Promotion of Education  
Sonja Kosac (Montenegro: Igalo) of the Igalo Institute  
Naila Eleze (Macedonia: Tetovo) of the Centre for Development and Coexistence  
Hamdija Kujundzic (Bosnia & Herzegovina: Gracanica) of Osmejih  
Alija Suko (Bosnia & Herzegovina: Mostar) of the Maternal/Child Health Center  
Sladjana Stanojlovic (Bosnia & Herzegovina: Doboj) of the Centar za Ment. Zdravlje  
Dean Adjukovic (Croatia: Zagreb) of the Center for Psychological Assistance  
Tanja Francicovic (Croatia: Reijka) of the Clinic for Psychotrauma

### ***Regional At-large seats***

Ksendija Kondic (Serbia: Belgrade) of Familia  
Cveta Jankovska (Macedonia: Skopje) of the Macedonian Center for Mental Health

### ***International At-large seats***

Paula Gutlove, (USA: Cambridge, Massachusetts) of the Institute for Resource and Security Studies  
Anne Marie Miorner Wagner (Austria: Graz) of the OMEGA Health Care Center

### ***Secretary General***

Vahida Huzejrovic (Slovenia: Ljubljana) of the Together Center

### ***Executive Committee***

Paula Gutlove, Anica Mikus Kos, Slobodanka Stankovic. Anne Marie Miorner Wagner