



THE COLLEGE OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS
OF CANADA



LE COLLÈGE DES
MÉDECINS DE FAMILLE
DU CANADA

The Besroul Centre for Global Family Medicine

at the College of Family Physicians of Canada

Report 2020



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How to cite this document:

College of Family Physicians of Canada, Besroun Centre for Global Family Medicine.
The Besroun Centre for Global Family Medicine – Report 2020. Mississauga, ON:
College of Family Physicians of Canada; 2021.

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The Besrou Centre – 10 Years Already!

What a journey it has been. So much has been achieved since the initial concept of the Besrou Centre for Global Family Medicine (Besrou Centre) in 2010 and the first Besrou Forum in Toronto in 2012. This November we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary during our annual forum, whether virtually or in person.

This first annual report describes several major accomplishments for the advancement of family medicine locally, nationally, and globally. It also illustrates the level of recognition of our position among the most important decision makers in global health.

The first wave of COVID-19 showed us that family physicians were on the front lines, often without support, fighting against this new, unknown, and deadly virus. Some of these physicians continued to practise even without access to personal protective equipment, putting their own lives at risk.

The Besrou Centre continued to act as a hub, allowing our large Besrou family to keep in touch with one another and share the best strategies for battling the pandemic.

Thanks to the support of Dr. Francine Lemire, Executive Director and CEO of the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC), the CFPC, the 17 family medicine departments across Canada, our international partners, and our working groups, the Besrou Centre—and family medicine as a discipline—went from a state of unknown to one of global recognition.

Despite all the constraints imposed by the pandemic, Dr. David Ponka and his team succeeded in concluding several significant cooperation agreements with key

decision makers in Canada and elsewhere around the world.

The CFPC made the Besrou Centre into a department within the College, and the WHO allowed it to access its IntegratedCare4People website and its 192 member states.¹ Research projects were launched with WONCA and in countries around the world namely in South America and Africa.

In the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, we concluded significant agreements with the Conference Internationale des Doyens des Facultés de Médecine d'Expression Française (CIDMEF) and Réseau International Francophone pour la Responsabilité Sociale en Santé (RIFRESS). These organizations represent more than 100 faculties of medicine in 45 countries across four continents.

None of this could have been possible without everyone's involvement. Many collaborated—everyone added to our Besrou Centre. Thank you everyone.

To conclude, I would like to congratulate and thank Dr. David Ponka and his entire team for their excellent work to date and to wish them great success in the coming years.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

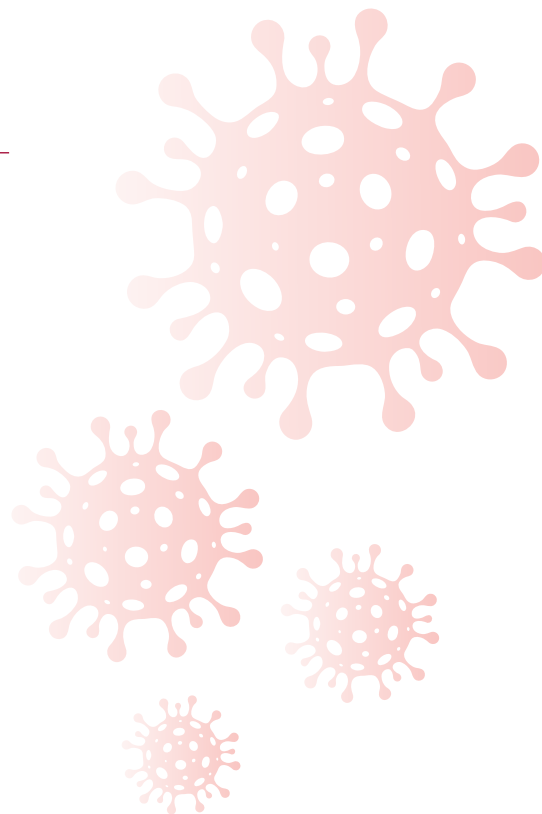
Dr. Sadok Besrou,
Founding Member, the Besrou Center
for Global Family Medicine

¹ Integrated People-Centred Health Services. IntegratedCare4People website. 2020. <https://www.integratedcare4people.org/>. Accessed February 25, 2021.

Guided by the values of equity, justice, excellence, reciprocity, and respect, in 2020 we continued the vision of working together to advance family medicine around the world. We demonstrated adaptability and responsiveness in a number of its initiatives this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus on capacity building and co-learning continued, with new formats such as podcasts, webinars, and online forums.

Key Besrour Centre Initiatives During the 2020 Pandemic Year

- COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Impact Grant Program (Co-RIG Program), with the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine
- Family Medicine Pivot (FM Pivot) Educational Initiative
- The Besrour Global Café
- Fellowship Program in Medical Education Research



“The Besrour Centre for Global Family Medicine is internationally renowned for its contributions in supporting the development of family medicine in partnership with colleagues based in countries all around the world. The Besrour Centre supports the exchange of knowledge and ideas and experiences which enables us to work together to improve the quality of care being provided to our individual patients and our communities in each of our countries.”

Dr. Michael Kidd

Principal Medical Advisor, Department of Health, Government of Australia

Professor of Primary Care Reform, Australian National University

Member, Besrour Centre Advisory Council

About Us

Our mission is to advance family medicine and promote health equity around the world by cultivating collaborations that enable the establishment of family medicine as the foundation of health systems. The Besroul Centre includes members from 38 countries, representing five continents (see Figure 1), acting as a connector for knowledge sharing to improve family medicine around the world. We do this knowing that family medicine models represent the integrated, patient-centred essential primary care that over half the world's population is lacking.

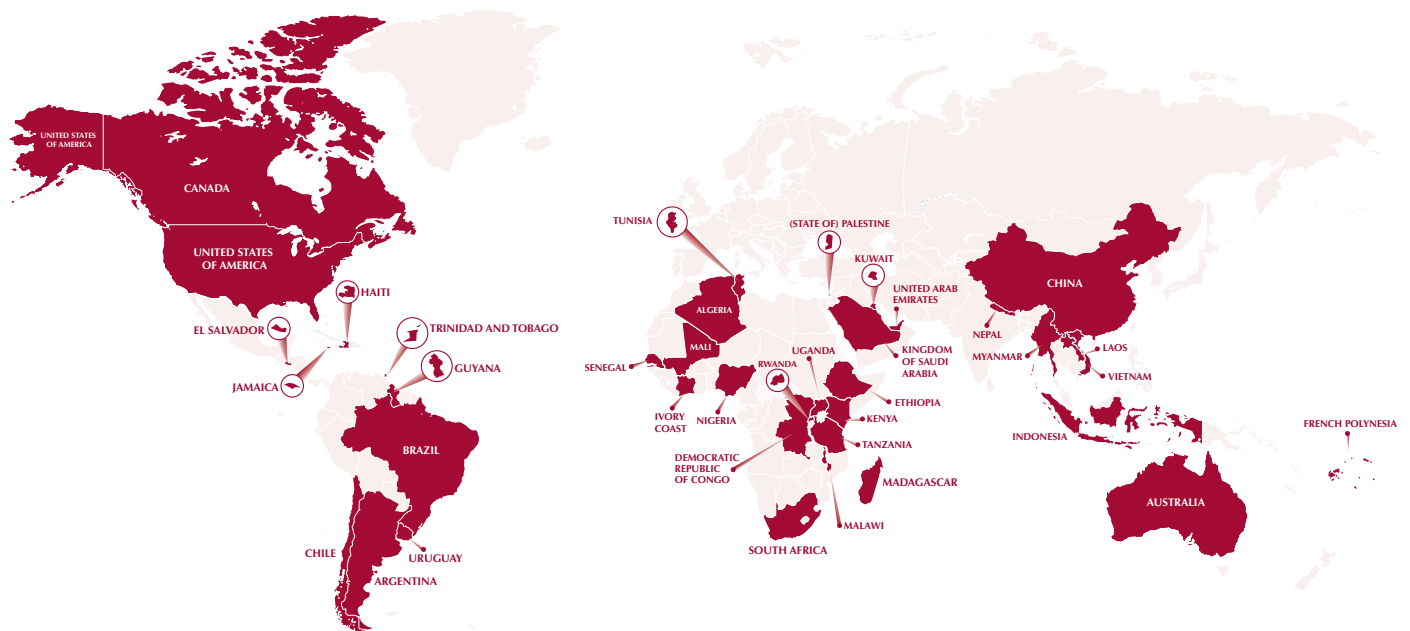


Figure 1. Map of current country members

The 38 current country members are: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, French Polynesia, Guyana, Haiti, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Kenya, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Laos, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United States, Uruguay, Vietnam



Virtual Co-learning

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Besroul Centre recognized that knowledge sharing was more vital than ever and worked to support the free exchange of information to inform responses around the world.

Using a network of international partners, we partnered with the journal *Canadian Family Physician* to create the podcast series *Family Medicine in the COVID-19 Global Pandemic*. Family physician Dr. Christine Gibson interviewed family physicians around the world who are helping to manage the pandemic. The 10 episodes—which have been downloaded 7,628 times—can be found online at <https://cfppodcast.libsyn.com/>.



International perspectives:

Australia, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Nepal, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Uganda.

The Besroul Centre also hosted the webinar “Approaches to the Global Pandemic from an International Perspective” to provide a platform to share co-learning between partners globally. Dr. William Goldberg, Dr. Elena Klusova, and Dr. Nisanth Menon—from the United States, Spain, and India respectively—were featured discussing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their clinical practices. The webinar included perspectives ranging from system-level issues to front-line work. The webinar has been streamed by over 1,900 viewers to date.



Continuing to Support Family Medicine Globally



Left: WONCA Africa in Kampala, Uganda—Collaborative meeting



Right: Working meeting in Asembo Bay, Kenya, on mental health primary care integration

In 2020 the Besrour Centre expanded its partnerships to include middle- to high-income countries. We supported capacity development by assisting with health reforms and providing resources and recommendations as they relate to health access, equity, and care for all. As a network resource for co-learning, we recognized the strength to support capacity building. In keeping with its altruistic mission, resources that came to the Besrour Centre as a result of the support offered to middle- to high-income countries were directed to support partnerships with low-income countries.



“There is no feeling of any power imbalance and everyone is committed to the vision The Besrour Centre has promoted the growth and development of family medicine around the world through reaching out to those in need particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The Besrour Centre has also created a platform for networking.”

Dr. Innocent Besigye

Makerere University, Uganda

COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Impact Grant Program

The COVID-19 pandemic has put immense pressure on global health systems and primary care in particular. This resulted in a first-time program funding response as the Besroul Centre supported the new COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Impact Grant Program (Co-RIG Program). Two initial grants were made possible through the generous support of the Foundation for Advancing Family Medicine. The goal of this initiative was to study efforts that aim to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19. In particular, the program sought innovative ideas that reduce the impact of COVID-19 on highly vulnerable populations around the world that have limited access to primary care.

Both inaugural projects focused on chronic disease management, supporting the impact of the third (chronic disease) and fourth (mental health) phases of the pandemic where family medicine models can continue to make important contributions.

University of Cape Town, South Africa



Innovations to reduce morbidity and mortality amongst people with diabetes in vulnerable communities in Cape Town, South Africa.

Dr. Klaus Von Pressentin,
University of Cape Town, South Africa

Syiah Kuala University, Indonesia



Family Health Cadre Empowerment Program: An innovation for chronic disease management during the COVID-19 pandemic in low- and middle-income countries.

Dr. Ichsan,
Syiah Kuala University, Indonesia

2020 Besroul Academic Poster Presentations Award Recipients

The Besroul Centre hosted the annual Besroul Poster Presentations at this year's first-ever virtual CFPC Family Medicine Forum in November. Recipients of the 2020 Besroul Poster Presentations awards were as follows:

Best Academic Poster



Perspectives in multi-disaster preparedness from Indonesia and Canada.

Dr. Rosaria Indah,

Syiah Kuala University

First author Dr. Rosaria Indah (Syiah Kuala University, Indonesia); co-authors Dr. Ichsan, Dr. Teuku Renaldi, Dr. Cut Rizka Rahmi, and Dr. Melissa Govindaraju (Syiah Kuala, Indonesia), and Dr. Lynda Redwood-Campbell (McMaster University).

Second Place Academic Poster



Informality in health care provision in urban Bangladesh: an evidence-based argument for increased health professional training.

Dr. Alayne M. Adams,

McGill University, Canada

First author Dr. Alayne M. Adams (McGill University); co-authors Rushdia Ahmed (University of Toronto) and Dr. Iqbal Anwar (Dhaka, Bangladesh).



"In the Besroul community we share how to deal with various issues in family medicine within different settings. We have learned a lot regarding family medicine system establishment and how to develop curriculum, comprehensive teaching methods and best evaluation to improve our family medicine system."

Dr. Ichsan,

Syiah Kuala University, Indonesia

The Besroul Global Café

The Besroul Global Café evolved from the energy inspired by the 6th WONCA Africa Regional conference in Kampala, Uganda, and emerged as an opportunity for members to continue to share and exchange ideas.



Photo: Besroul Centre colleagues at 6th WONCA Africa Regional Conference, Kampala, Uganda

The Café is a series of monthly peer-to-peer discussions hosted in an online forum. Local relevance of each session was achieved by ensuring participating members select the topic of discussion each month. With conversations facilitated in both English and French, colleagues connected globally in this supportive virtual space and formed new mentorship opportunities and explored best practices and lessons learned that were applicable to their local contexts and partnerships. The simultaneous translation allowed for all ideas to be shared among members, deepening connections between countries that may not otherwise have the opportunity to connect.



Besroul Global Café discussion topics covered to date:

- Skills for facilitating family medicine residents' learning
- Approaches to formative assessment of family medicine residents
- How is your family medicine department preparing for COVID-19?
- COVID-19 one month later—how has your approach evolved?
- Pandemic discussions and how to conduct quality improvement of teaching and learning activities in family medicine programs
- Curriculum design for family medicine
- How have people thought about their local context when developing family medicine curriculum: challenges and successes, advice for others
- Research in family medicine—how are people doing this in their own contexts and departments?
- Approach to research in family practice
- Adequate orientation for junior residents
- Advocacy for family medicine education

Fellowship Program in Medical Education Research

This year the Besroul Centre offered a learning opportunity to its global network in the form of a fellowship program. The aim of the fellowship was to support the development of primary care globally. Funding for the fellowship is part of a five-year partnership with the CFPC and Scotiabank, MD Financial and in collaboration with the Canadian Medical Association. We supported the first Medical Education Research Fellow, Dr. Trinidad Rodriguez, Department of Family Medicine, Universidad Católica, Santiago, Chile. Dr. Rodriguez worked on the design of a family medicine capacity-building initiative—a training program that enabled multidisciplinary health teams to improve the strategy of care provided to infants, children, adolescents, and their families.



“Despite [the pandemic], it’s been a fantastic experience. I’ve learned a lot in terms of designing a research framework and applying the most suitable teaching and evaluating methodologies for my capacity-building project. I’ve had the chance to meet outstanding colleagues who have been very kind and supportive through all these difficult times. Now I feel part of a great community of practice, thanks to everyone at Besroul Centre who made this possible.”

Dr. Trinidad Rodriguez

Department of Family Medicine, Catholic University of Chile

A photograph of a male doctor with a stethoscope around his neck, looking down at a young girl. The girl is smiling and looking up at the doctor. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

Looking Ahead

Family Medicine Pivot Educational Initiative

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a rapid disruption to family physicians' practices and training, and has revealed gaps in the capacity of health care systems. However, it has also led to a surge in innovation as primary care providers and educators adapt to this new paradigm. There is an opportunity to expand on this interest and energy to collectively build resiliency and strengthen systems and build capacity to manage the next emergent crisis when it arises.

The Family Medicine Pivot Educational Initiative (FM Pivot) is a response to COVID-19 and draws from the experience of a number of our global partners, building on learnings from how they have adapted within their own health systems. The initiative was developed by a team of global partners to assist family physicians and family medicine educators prepare for future challenges within their own contexts. Each module is co-led by a Canadian and an international leader.

FM Pivot Modules

Each module is co-developed by a Canadian and an international leader in family medicine. The initial five modules in development will focus on specific topics within the following themes: Research and Quality Improvement; Chronic Disease Management; Disaster Management; Lessons in Virtual Education; Mental health Integration.

Conclusion



We hope you have enjoyed our first annual report. We thank the CFPC for delivering on the vision of international collaboration to advance family medicine and primary care around the world. Ten years after our first Besrour Forum, and after five years of official existence, we are delivering concrete results for educational and research programs, and thank all our Canadian and international partners for their engagement. The spirit of collaborative learning is alive and well.

Looking forward, we know that until the COVID-19 pandemic is controlled in all contexts, we all remain at risk. We believe that family medicine will play a pivotal role as health systems contend with the next phases of the pandemic—on chronic disease and mental health—and we invite you to join our response.

Dr. David Ponka,

Director The Besrour Centre for Global Family Medicine
The College of Family Physicians of Canada





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