



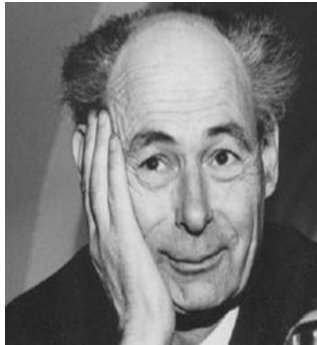
ICPCM Newsletter – May 2017

Professor Wim van Lerberghe: Winner of the Paul Tournier Prize 2017

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From the Laudatio presented at the 10th Geneva Conference on Person Centered Medicine



Paul Tournier



Wim Van Lerberghe

The International College is celebrating the memory of a leading pioneer of person centered medicine, Dr Paul Tournier (1898-1986), through the establishment of a Prize and Lecture with the cooperation of the Paul Tournier Association.

Paul Tournier was born on the 12th of May 1898. When he was just two months old, his father, who was a Pastor, died. He lost his mother when he was 6 years old and grew up a shy but academically bright child with his older sister in an uncle's house. He studied Medicine at the University of Geneva graduating in 1923

Through 1924 Paul Tournier was assistant medical doctor at the *Medical Policlinic* in Geneva under Prof. Bickel. In 1925 he opened a private general medical practice in Geneva and became increasingly interested in a Reformed Christian Faith. In 1932 he joined The Oxford Group. As a result of his interests he investigated the relationship between medicine, counseling, and spiritual

values. Although he initially considered giving up medicine for counseling he finally decided to combine the two, and in 1937 he transformed his private medical practice into a counseling practice.

Against this background of his early life experiences and the knowledge and insights from his practice he wrote his first book “Médecine de la Personne”. In it he observed that the rapid progress in medicine and surgery was leading to an analytic and technical practice of medicine, which conceived the ill human being as a mechanism needing repair while ignoring the psychological and spiritual aspects of the person.

For Paul Tournier, *personne* meant the whole human being in relationship with another *personne*. For the physician, *Médecine de la Personne* encompasses appropriate technical medicine, but carries a wider and more creative responsibility through a personal relationship with the patient, in whom he is interested as another person, who has potential for growth and development even in the context of illness.

Paul Tournier wrote 25 books translated into 30 languages, reaching over 2 million readers, and led conference tours all over the world. He created the International Association of Medicine of the Person in 1947. Ensuing annual meetings of physicians and other care professionals in Europe continue today.

Paul Tournier helped shape the conceptualization of the doctor - patient relationship in the later 20th century. Since then, with the work Rogers and Engel and the evolution of the Person Centered Network and the International College of Person Centered Medicine, his message has spread globally and is still influencing a continuing dialogue concerning the need for a strong ethical basis for medical practice.

In this wider context, it seems very fitting that Professor Wim Van Lerberghe should be the first recipient of the Paul Tournier Prize. Professor Wim Van Lerberghe has had an outstanding career in Public Health within the World Health Organisation (WHO), leading to ten years of service in the Dept. of Health Systems Policies first as a Coordinator and then as Director. During this period, he joined the Second Geneva Conference of the International Network of Person Centered Medicine and brought the WHO into the early discussions with the Person Centered Medicine movement inspired by the work of Paul Tournier.

Professor Van Lerberghe's early experience as a District Medical Officer in Mozambique and Research Fellow at the Public Health Unit of the Institute for Tropical Medicine, Kasongo, Zaire and Antwerp, Belgium proved to be a sound foundation for his subsequent career. While in Zaire he undertook a large follow up nutritional study in Kasonga, measuring the weight, height, and arm circumferences of under-five children. The results showed that local health centers, concerned with everyday health problems of the population, can have a strong positive influence on the general health of a rural population.

This study importantly revealed that the factors identified by Paul Tournier were applicable in the wider context of primary care and public health. Person- and people-centeredness were found to be two sides of the same coin. A vertical targeted and reductionist approach to solving the problems of needy local communities proved ineffective, costly and unsustainable.

These insights were brought together into the seminal WHO Health Report 2008, *Primary Health Care: Now more than Ever*. Primary Health Care (PHC) needs to be the foundation of a country's health system by putting the people "at the center of health care". What 'people' consider desirable ways of living as individuals and what they expect for their societies – i.e. what people value – constitute important parameters for governing the health sector. PHC has remained the benchmark for most countries' discourse on health precisely because the PHC movement tried to provide rational, evidence-based and anticipatory responses to health needs and to these social expectations. This theme has resonated throughout our subsequent Geneva Conferences and discussions with the WHO ever since.

Prof. van Welberghe collaborated with Dr. Yongyuth Pongsupap in a seminal paper "People-centered Medicine in Thailand and WHO's renewal of primary health care" published in the *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, and published a follow up article in 2012 on articulating Person-centered Medicine and People-centered Public Health in the *International Journal of Person Centered Medicine*.

In all, Prof. Van Lerberghe has published over 200 scientific articles and book chapters. He was Editor in Chief of two highly influential WHO's publications: the World Health Report 2005 (Maternal, Newborn and Child Health) and the already mentioned World Health Report 2008 (Primary Health Care). He has produced reports dealing with health systems development in various countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, based on over 200 short term

support missions for governments and development agencies and participated in numerous scientific projects and developments.

More recently, in 2013, he was appointed Professor of International Health, at the Instituto de Higiene e Medicina Tropical, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal; which included teaching responsibilities for MPH and PhD programmes together with health systems research and the integration of the Institute's research activities on the quality of maternal health and midwifery care. He has assisted the Moroccan government in drafting its white paper on Healthcare Reform.

In 2014-2015, he was appointed Head, Health Sector Reform Programme in Greece and seconded to the Regional Office for Europe, World Health Organization to lead the EU-funded technical assistance programme designing and implementing its health reform.

We are delighted that Professor Van Lerberghe agreed to present the first Paul Tournier Prize Lecture. This award highlights his commitment to humanity, incredible capacity for hard and path-opening work, and inspirational leadership in the field of person- and people-centered health care. His lecture will be published in the International Journal of Person Centered Medicine.

Further Reading

1. Paul Tournier Association: www.paultournier.org

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4. Mezzich JE, Snaedal J, van Weel C, Heath I. The International Network for Person-centered Medicine: Background and first steps. *World Medical Journal* 2009; 55: 104-107.

5. Mezzich JE, Miles, Snaedal J, van Weel C, Botbol M, Salloum IM, Van Lerberghe W. Articulating Person-centered Medicine and People-centered Public Health. *International Journal of Person Centered Medicine* 2012; 2: 1-5.

6. Pongsupap Y, Van Lerberghe W. People-centered medicine and WHO's renewal of primary health care. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 2011; 17: 339–340.

7. Van Lerberghe W, Evans T, Rasanathan K, Mechbal A. World Health Report 2008. *Primary health Care: Now more than Ever*. World Health Organization, Geneva, 2008.

8. Pongsupap Y, Van Lerberghe W. Is motivation enough? Responsiveness, patient-centeredness, medicalization and cost in family practice and conventional care settings in Thailand. *Human Resources for Health*, 2006; 4: 19.

9. Manuel A, Matthews Z and Van Lerberghe W. Make every mother and child count. Findings of the World Health Report 2005. *UN Chronicle*, 2005; 3: 65-67.

10. Van Lerberghe W (for the Kasongo Project Team). The Kasongo Project. *World Health Forum* 1983; 4: 41-45.