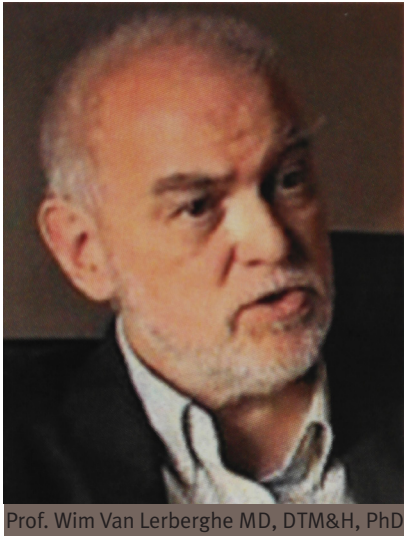


# Professor Wim Van Lerberghe, MD, DTM&H, PhD

**Jim Appleyard, president ICPCM**



Prof. Wim Van Lerberghe MD, DTM&H, PhD

Professor Wim Van Lerberghe has had an outstanding career in Public Health within the WHO leading to 10 years of service in the Dept. of Health Systems Policies first as a coordinator and then as Director. During this period he joined us at the second meeting 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, 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 the under-fives.

More than 32,000 measurements of each of the three parameters were obtained in a semi-longitudinal study. The main health problems encountered in the local population were diarrheas, respiratory infections, malaria, tuberculosis/whooping cough, measles, malnutrition and worm related diseases. A preventive vaccination program against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, poliomyelitis, measles and tuberculosis was set up and adapted to W.H.O. recommendations in 1981. The incidence of measles and whooping cough declined dramatically during the period 1978 – 1982. Diarrhea was treated with oral rehydration. About 167 of the children under five suffered from malnutrition, mostly related to worm diseases; therefore, a suppressive dose of an anthelmintic was

given every three months. The results showed that local health centers, concerned with everyday health problems of the population, can have a strong positive influence upon the general health situation of a rural population.

The study emphasized just how important the factors identified by Paul Tournier were applicable in the wider context of primary care and the public health. Person and public 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 to be ineffective, costly and unsustainable.

These thoughts were brought together with his colleagues in the seminal WHO Report Health report of 2008 at the WHO 'Primary health Care: Now more than Ever.'

Primary Health Care (PHV) 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 Lerberghe collaborated with Yongyuth Pongsupap in a paper called People-centered medicine in Thailand and WHO's renewal of primary health care in the Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice, and published a follow up article in 2012 on The Fourth Geneva Conference on Person-centered Medicine: Articulating Person-centered Medicine and People-centered public health in The International Journal of Person Centered Medicine

In all Wim has published over 200 scientific articles and books. He was Editor in Chief of WHO's flagship publications World Health Report 2005 (Maternal, Newborn and Child Health) and World Health Report 2008 (Primary Health Care).

He has produced reports dealing with health systems development in countries in Africa, Middle East and Asia, based on over 200 short-term support missions for governments and development agencies and participated in numerous scientific projects and development.

More recently in 2013: Wim was appointed Professor of International Health, at the Instituto de Higiene e Medecina Tropical, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal; which included teaching responsibilities for MPH and PhD program together with health systems research and the integration of the institute's research activities in the quality of maternal health and midwifery care. He has assisted the Moroccan government in drafting its 'Livre Blanc' a white paper on healthcare reform.

And in 2014 – 2015: He was appointed Head, Health Sector Reform Programme, Greece and seconded to the Regional Office for Europe, World Health Organization to lead the EU funded technical assistance program designing and implementing its health reform.

We are delighted that Wim has agreed to give our first Paul Tournier Lecture, for his dedication to humanity, incredible capacity for hard work and inspirational leadership in the field of people centered public health.

## **Selected References**

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