Revitalization of Academic Medicine: Looking into the Future

Our readers certainly remember the first articles in the FORUM series on academic medicine in the June issue of the Croatian Medical Journal in 2004 (Fig. 1). The first seven articles published in the FORUM, together with the editorial by Peter Tugwell (1), marked the creation of the Working Party of the International Campaign to Revitalize Academic Medicine – ICRAM (Fig. 2).

ICRAM started in 2003, when the BMJ, Lancet, and other journals or institutions working or depending on academic medicine, including the Croatian Medical Journal, launched a global initiative to look into the present status of academic medicine around the world and to develop a new vision for academic medicine in the global society. The first ICRAM event was the creation of its Working Party in June 2004, when medical academics from 14 countries (Table 1) met near London, UK, to discuss the core values of academic medicine – teaching, research, and health care; establish an evidence base for academic medicine; develop strategy for the development of academic medicine; and stimulate a debate on academic medicine among different stakeholders, both those within and outside of academic medicine. The Working Party is headed by the Leader of the Campaign, Prof. Peter Tugwell, from the Centre for Global Health at the University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada. The Campaign Coordinator is Dr. Jocalyn Clark, Assistant Editor, BMJ, UK. During the inaugural meeting in June 2004, the Working Party met with a number of stakeholders in academic medicine, including researchers, pol-

Figure 1. Cover page of the Croatian Medical Journal with the first articles in the FORUM series on academic medicine.

Figure 2. Logo of the International Campaign to Revitalize Academic Medicine – ICRAM (design by Dr. Edwin Jesudason, ICRAM Working Party member from Liverpool, UK).
The first activity of the Working Party was setting the agenda for reaching the Campaign’s aims: vision of academic medicine in 21st century, increasing the impact of academic medicine on society, integration of academic medicine into global health and wider social arena, and increasing recruitment and job satisfaction in academic medicine (2). The Working Party also defined the topics of their research into academic medicine, qualitative analysis of previously proposed definitions of academic medicine, reviews of evidence on capacity in academic medicine (including aspects of careers, mentoring, recruitment, and incentives), reviews of research productivity of academic medicine (3). The research into the evidence base of academic medicine is ongoing, and we call all those interested in joining research activities or those already conducting similar research to contact the Evidence Task Group coordinator, Dr. John Ioannidis, at jioannid@cc.uci.edu.

Members of the Working Party also convened advisory groups of various stakeholders in academic medicine, as well as seven regional advisory groups, modeled after the regions of the World Health Organization.

Another ICRAM activity is the development of “My Path” series of articles about careers in academic medicine. The first article in the series, featuring Dr. Karen Sliva-Hähnle from South Africa, will be published in the BMJ Careers. The article series aims to capture the diversity of careers in academic medicine, and explore novel resolutions of perceived obstacles to entering academic medicine. If you think the story of your academic career should be shared with the medical community, or wish to nominate an academic for the profile, contact Dr. Gretchen Purcell, at gretchen.purcell@stanfordalumni.org.

After the publication of the first essays on academic medicine in June 2004, the Croatian Medical Journal opened its FORUM pages to medical academics all over the world, and published 23 essays, the last three in this issue of the journal (pages 4-20). The authors of the essays come from 20 countries all over the world, presenting a range of experiences from the North to the South and from the West to the East, as well as authors’ visions on the future of academic medicine, both globally and locally. The essays were collected in a separate book, “Revitalization of Academic Medicine” (see cover page), published just before the meeting of the ICRAM Working Party to develop a number of alternative future scenarios for academic medicine, London, UK, 7-9 February 2005. The value of the book is best illustrated by its preface, written by Peter Tugwell, ICRAM Campaign Leader:

“It is a great pleasure to introduce this book containing a series of articles on academic medicine, under the fine editorship of Ana Marušić.

This book contains a delightfully eclectic range of thought provoking articles that will help stimulate this deep and broad international debate.
As we move into this new millennium, it is important to think about the future of the "research and development" base that medicine relies upon to optimize health and healthcare. Although one can point to quite a number of successes in academic medicine through the end of the last century, such as the move from didactic lectures to small group problem-based learning, from physician-dominated to transdisciplinary teams, the concept of the continuum from cell to clinic to community, research breakthroughs such as the biologics for therapy, and the increase in life expectancy for those with AIDS able to afford antiretroviral therapy, there is a strong sense that major changes are needed. The reasons are outlined in the editorial which initiated the discussion on the pages of the *Croatian Medical Journal* as a part of the International Campaign to Revitalize Academic Medicine.

Knowledge is a common good and with the advances in information technology it makes sense to take a global perspective. Thus it is good to see articles from a variety of countries: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Republic of Macedonia, Malawi, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and USA.

In addition to detailing the problems and describing the issues, it is important to propose solutions for debate – as an example the idea of pairing between industrialized countries and low income country institutions for mutual benefit with shared university appointments and commitment to make this a “brain-gain” rather than a “brain-drain” proposed in the article by academics from Bosnia and Herzegovina and their colleagues in Western Europe.

The International Campaign to Revitalize Academic Medicine is in the process of developing a number of futures scenarios – this collection of articles provides an impressive resource for this. Readers of this book are encouraged to participate in the Campaign through the campaign website, bmj.bmjjournals.com/academic medicine.

For their work on alternative and very different futures of academic medicine, the ICRAM Working Party also invited a number of other medical academics and stakeholders to describe their vision of academic medicine in 2020, asking them the following 5 questions: 1) What are the major issues we currently face in AM (both those within and those beyond our control)? 2) Given these trends, what new performance competencies (roles, functions) do you think academic medicine needs to acquire? 3) If you were worried about one thing in academic medicine, what would it be and why? 4) In your experience with academic medicine, what are the strengths and weaknesses of academic medicine’s contribution to your community (organization, journal, etc.)? and 5) If you had total control over academic medicine, what would you do? We received more than 90 responses and thank our colleagues for their contribution and bold visions, which were very valuable in creating five different scenarios of academic medicine in 2020.

The three articles in the FORUM on academic medicine in this journal’s issue and the book “Revitalization of Academic Medicine” are not the end but just a milestone of our journal’s activities on the promotion of academic medicine. All FORUM articles are available at the journal web-site (www.cmj.hr), as well as at the official ICRAM web page (http://bmj.bmjjournals.com/academicmedicine/cmj.shtml). The pages of the *Croatian Medical Journal* are still opened to your comments, suggestions, and visions.

Ana Marušić
Editor in Chief, *Croatian Medical Journal*
ICRAM Working Party member

References
1 Tugwell P. The campaign to revitalize academic medicine kicks off: we need a deep and broad international debate to begin. Croat Med J. 2004;45:241-2.