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## 25 Years of Experience as the First Family Medicine Specialist in Academic Life

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In 1977, as a student to whom the first theoretical information about primary health care was given by Prof. Dr. Nusret Fişek in the Faculty of Medicine at Hacettepe University, I had the first internship in Etimesgut Orta Bereket Village. In the obligatory service, I had the opportunity to turn this theory into practice in Başçiftlik Health Center, which was the center for socialization among physicians at that time.

After the military service, while working in the Health Center in Eskişehir in 1986, I shared my dream with my friends that was: "I wish we had expertise in the health center." Surprisingly, my dream had already been fulfilled! (The Family Medicine accepted as a department on July 5, 1983, in the Specialization Regulation on Medicine). In the mid-1980s, when it was difficult to reach the information we needed, I started family medicine specialization training with the positive effects of a public health lecturer on me, who guided me, in December 1987 in Ankara Hospital within an uncertain atmosphere. The absence of our own clinical lecturer and spending all the specialization period in rotations guided us to be more supportive and collaborative for each other. With this solidarity, in 1990, we established our specialization association as family medicine assistants (AHUD: Association of the Family Physicians).

In 1991, I graduated as the third specialist in Ankara Hospital. I was also appointed to the Mother-Child Health and Family Planning Center in Eskişehir at that time when some of the required specializations were exempted from the compulsory service. I kept my communication, mainly based on education, with my specialist and assistant friends and Anadolu University Faculty of Medicine. In our uncertain atmosphere, we were very excited and had increased our morale and motivation with our first national congress on November, 25-27, 1993. In the following month, the first Family Physician Trainer Course was held in Ankara by the Ministry of Health (with the support of the Royal College of General Practitioners). This course was an event in which family medicine specialists were working or studying in different cities and institutions all around the country came together.

On July 16, 1993, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) decided to establish the departments of family medicine in the faculties of medicine in Turkey. Given that the publication of my thesis paved the way for me to academia. On May 27, 1994, I was appointed to an academic position as a family medicine specialist (at Eskişehir Osmangazi University), which was the first appointment in the field of family medicine in our country.

It was great to be the first physician in the discipline of Family Medicine, and although it was challenging at that time, I had the full responsibility. There was no role model that I could follow. During this period, not only some members in the same faculty but also some members from different disciplines at some universities were assigned to assist me. If you are alone,



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working through becomes possible only by collaborating with other disciplines or other universities. In our discipline, the arrival of new faculty members into the academic field had been a little bit slow in the first years, so our team had only seven members after three years. In the following years, the development of the academic staff accelerated, and after years, the rapid development of the family medicine discipline in the academic field of our country gained appreciation from all over the world.

Progress in this process was not so easy. We encountered serious obstacles when we attempted to work for the development of the discipline of family medicine. An attempt was made to subtract our discipline from the associate professorship list, and this problem was overcome with the support of the rectors of some universities having a department of family medicine. Afterwards, there were mass withdrawals from the associate professorship examinations.

Our association was established in 1990. Our first congress was organized in 1993. Our first journal titled "Family Physician" was published in 1995, and our permanent journal was published in 1997 by our Association of Family Physicians. Today, as associations and foundations, the number of our organizations, our journals in different indexes and our national/international scientific activities in family medicine has reached two digits.

In accordance with the law on family medicine, a Pilot Implementation was issued on 9 December 2004 and the Regulation on Pilot Practice of Family Medicine dated July 6,

2005. The pilot application started on 15 September 2005 in Düzce, Turkey, which was selected as the pilot province. The application covered the whole country in 2010 by progressing rapidly.

In the first years of our specialization training, we evaluated the ideal family medicine practices, boundaries and red lines that we learned by researching ourselves in our activities. However, with the implementation in our country, we experienced problems between theory and practice with the conditions of our country and the approaches of politicians and policymakers. Unfortunately, some of the problems still have been continuing, such as differences in education, such as different educational models and their integration to the educational system. In the first years, when the communication was not so easy, our perfect unity had difficulty with the negative effects of the problems we encountered in practice and the delay of their solutions. However, a large team of family medicine specialists, who embraced and promoted the ideals of the discipline, tries to keep the ideals alive in our professional practices in an atmosphere shaped by difficulties and pressures. I think that, whether there are problems or not, family physicians' supporting patients/advocates in their all health issues and in their relations with health care providers is important for the acquisition of these organizations and rights.

When I look at the 25-year process and developments, I believe that the future will be more promising, healthier and brighter with the efforts of the physicians and health workers who will dedicate their future to family medicine.