

Social
Impact



Impact Story

World Rural Health Conference (WONCA)

Improving health, empowering communities



CONFERENCE DETAILS

WHEN
June 2022

DELEGATES
750

WHERE
University of Limerick

ECONOMIC IMPACT
€540k

**The World Rural Health Conference
was aligned with UN Sustainable
Development Goals**



The World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) was established by 18 members in 1972. It currently consists of 122 member organisations in 102 countries, with a total of 500,000 family doctors. WONCA represents and acts as an advocate for its constituent members at an international level, where it interacts with world bodies such as the World Health Organization.

ADVANCING RURAL GENERAL PRACTICE IN IRELAND



Hosted by the University of Limerick, the World Rural Health Conference 2022 united global healthcare professionals to explore and address rural health challenges.

Held from 17th-20th June 2022, the World Rural Health Conference focused on the theme 'Improving Health, Empowering Communities.' This annual event, created by the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA), gathers experts from fields such as health, science, engineering, arts and NGOs to tackle rural healthcare issues.

Ireland, with one of the highest rural populations in Europe, was the perfect host destination for this event. The event showcased strong leadership from the Conference Chair, Professor Liam Glynn, and the organising committee at the University of Limerick and the **Shannon Region Convention and Sports Bureau**. Organised by the General Practice discipline at the University of Limerick's School of Medicine, in collaboration with WONCA, the Irish College of General Practitioners and the Rural, Island and Dispensing Doctors of Ireland, the conference promoted many important rural health initiatives.

The World Rural Health Conference had a strong impact on rural healthcare in Ireland. Here are some of the key highlights and outcomes:

- Established Ireland's first ICGP National Standing Committee for Rural General Practice.
- Appointed the first ever Professor of Rural General Practice at the University of Limerick.
- Created a novel Rural GP Fellowship programme, supported by a €1.4 million investment from the Health Service Executive (HSE).
- Developed a new Rural Teaching Hub at University of Limerick's School of Medicine, allowing students to spend 25% of their clinical training in rural communities.
- Published the "Limerick Declaration on Rural Healthcare", a blueprint for improving high-quality healthcare in rural and remote areas nationally and internationally.
- Hosted the WHO global meeting on the development of a Rural Health Equity toolkit.

AWARDS

The World Rural Health Conference won two prestigious awards at Fáilte Ireland's Conference Ambassador Recognition Awards in 2023. Professor Liam Glynn won the award for Social Impact and Legacy, and he was also awarded Shannon Regional Conference Ambassador Champion.



Ruth Andrews, Chair of Fáilte Ireland
Professor Liam Glynn, University of Limerick

“As a result of this conference and the associated “Limerick Declaration”, we now have a novel Rural GP Fellowship programme to support the next generation of rural general practitioners and the first ever Irish Professor of Rural General Practice appointed at the University of Limerick, advocating for the development of healthcare within rural communities into the future.”

Conference Ambassador, Professor Liam Glynn, University of Limerick

