Statement on the death of Fons Sips

Fons Sips (from 2005)

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death on 22\textsuperscript{nd} July 2016 of our great friend, colleague and one of the Founding Fathers of the Vasco da Gama Movement, Fons Sips.

Alphons Jacobus Ignatius Sips, known as Fons Sips, was born on 11\textsuperscript{th} August 1940 in Heerlen, the Netherlands. Following his studies in medicine and psychology at the University of Nijmegen, in 1972, Fons settled as a single handed Family Doctor in the village of Vught, where he practiced until his retirement in 2006. Fons was also a Senior Lecturer at the University of Maastricht and a GP Trainer on the vocational training scheme and served as Secretary of the Dutch Board of GP/FM from 1987 – 1994.

In the early 1980s, Fons began his journey of involvement in European Family Medicine. From 1987 he served on the Board of SIMG, subsequently becoming Vice-President and then President. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Fons was instrumental in the amalgamation of SIMG and WONCA. This culminated on 5\textsuperscript{th}
October 1995 with the inaugural conference of WONCA Europe; the celebration of an umbrella European structure including the National Colleges and the European Network Organisations (EURACT, EGPRN and EQuiP) took place in the meeting room of the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

It is however, as one of the Founding Fathers of the Vasco da Gama Movement that we, in this, his Family, most fondly remember Fons. The foundations of our VdGM Family stretch back to 2002 during preparations for the 2004 WONCA Europe Amsterdam Conference. Along with representatives from EURACT and a small enthusiastic working party of trainees from the Netherlands, Fons was instrumental in developing a project; a preconference meeting for six international groups each involving students with EURACT Teachers as guides. This initiative was the effective birth of the Vasco da Gama Movement.

VdGM is a Family in which many new and future GPs / Family Doctors have, and continue to find, support and inspiration. It is a Family to which we are all proud to belong ... a Family that was created by Fons Sips! While VdGM has now become firmly established among the Networks of WONCA Europe and has grown immeasurably in its activities and collaborations, the passing of Fons Sips serves to remind us of the importance of ensuring that our culture, heritage, history and origins are never forgotten.

As a tribute to the vision and fortitude of Fons Sips, to mark his death and celebrate his life, and in recognising and expressing deep appreciation for his contribution and commitment to making VdGM the successful and vibrant organization it is today, we are proud to announce the creation of the "Fons Sips Outstanding Achievement Award"; the inaugural award will be made at WONCA Prague in June 2017.

Finally, to Anneke, Herman, Bernadette and Jacqueline on behalf of everyone in the VdGM Family, we offer sincere condolences and warmest best wishes at this time. While we have lost one of our Founding Fathers, you have lost your Father. We hope you will take solace in knowing the deep regard with which he was held in VdGM.

Dr Peter A Sloane
President, Vasco da Gama Movement
On Behalf of the entire Vasco da Gama Movement