

# A new Council for a new Academy



The election of a new Council for the Academy of Family Physicians is taking place on 4 November 2010. It will be the first election under the new constitution of the Academy. Under the new constitution, there will be 18 Council members – a President and a Vice-President, 10 nominated members and six elected members. The Council will

be confirmed at the AGM on 13 November 2010.

It will be the task of the new Council to establish the Academy firmly as the professional society for family medicine in South Africa – offering appropriate continuing professional development, organising conferences, publishing the South African Family Practice and handbooks for training, setting standards for the specialty training, representing South African family physicians on international bodies such as WONCA, and providing leadership for the on-going development of the discipline.

Family medicine and general practice are notoriously difficult to organise and lead as a discipline, so the new leaders will not have an easy task. I believe one of the key ingredients of success will be to ensure that the Academy is affiliated with the South African Medical Association (SAMA) as a specialty subgroup. This process has already been started.

Another very important task will be to muster the support of all family physicians and academically-minded general practitioners/medical officers in South Africa. This will ensure that the Academy operates from a sound support base, but also provides for the financial viability of the organisation. Running a professional society is not without costs and the Academy needs a stable income stream. It will be important to ensure that registrars and community service doctors are exposed to the Academy and the benefits of membership. Departments of Family Medicine will play an important role in this respect. The Academy has already created a special membership category for registrars, and they will be represented by an elected member on the Council.

Generalist medical practitioners who are not registered as family physicians are also encouraged to join the Academy to enjoy the membership privileges. General practitioners and medical officers in the public sector fall into this category. They can become associate members and will also be represented by an elected associated member on the Council.

A special word of thanks must go to our outgoing chairman Dr Shadrack Mazaza, who steered the Academy through the important transformation process. He will remain a key role player to ensure the Academy's smooth incorporation into the SAMA subgroup stable.

## Caring for our doctors

The medical community is still reeling from the shocking news that a 35-year-old female doctor, a paediatric registrar, was raped whilst on duty in Pelonomi Hospital in Bloemfontein on Saturday 30 November 2010. She was first brutally assaulted with a brick and then raped by three men in an empty ward under reconstruction. One of the men was only 16 years old. This is another example of the violent nature of crime in this country and the fact that women, in particular, are facing the brunt of this tidal wave of crime.

As reprehensible as this act was in itself, the fact that not even health care workers caring for our vulnerable children in poor communities are spared from such violent crime sends out a chilling message. We are thankful to the Police that the three alleged perpetrators were swiftly apprehended and can only hope that appropriate justice will prevail. We carry our affected colleague and her family in our thoughts and prayers. We also salute all the other female colleagues prepared to work in Pelonomi Hospital under these circumstances, placing the interests of their patients above their legitimate fears for their own personal safety.

Needless to point out, but the security measures at Pelonomi and all public health facilities need a drastic makeover, but more importantly, government and society at large need to take ownership of the unacceptable crime situation in our beloved country.

## A new Deputy Minister of Health

At the writing of this article, the news broke that President Jacob Zuma had appointed Dr Gwen Ramakgopa as the new Deputy Minister of Health. Dr Ramakgopa is a qualified medical practitioner and mayor of the City of Tshwane. She has both the medical background and managerial experience necessary for her new position. We wish Dr Ramakgopa everything of the best for this very challenging job and are looking forward to working with her.

**Pierre JT de Villiers**  
Editor-in-chief

E-mail: editor@safpj.co.za