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A CALL FOR COMMITMENT...

Nobody thinks that surgeons should dictate what standards physicians should uphold. Paediatricians would never presume to advise gynaecologists as to the content of their curriculum or their method of practise.

No such circumspection exists when it comes to family medicine or to the academic basis of general practice. This area is fair game for all and sundry.

In medical school we are taught by specialists, and departments of family medicine have little or no say in curricula or examinations.

It is therefore no surprise, or should not be, that when newly qualified practitioners enter general practice they find it totally unlike academic medicine and feel lost and inadequate when patients do not fit the neat little boxes that they have been taught to fit them into.

General practice is different. Only generalists know what generalists really do, what they really need and what standards are applicable to them.

Hence, our mouthpiece, our own journal,

should reflect these sentiments. It should be a journal for generalists, by generalists about generalists, and about generalists' own particular brand of medicine. We should use, from our specialist colleagues, that knowledge and those skills that are appropriate for us, but we should remain the arbiters of what is appropriate for us.

The learned teacher-pupil relationship, from our undergraduate days, must be unlearned and not perpetuated if we are to take our rightful place in the medical sun.

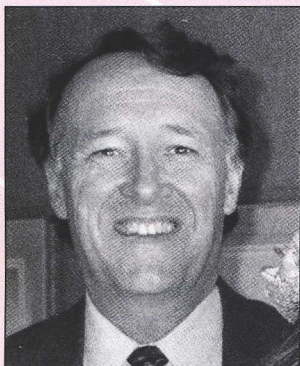
There is no other journal in South Africa that caters exclusively and unashamedly for South African family medicine's cause. We are now an accredited journal and have, as a prime priority, the publication of original South African family medicine research.

If you believe that the work you are doing has merit and that we generalists in South Africa play an important role in medical care, use your journal. The strength of any team depends upon the commitment of its individual members.

The strength and success of the *South African Family Practice* will be determined by your commitment and input. ●

Chairman's message

A message from Prof. Sparks



Prof. Bruce Sparks
National Chairman

***There is a tide in the
 affairs of men,
 Which, taken at the flood,
 leads on to fortune;
 Omitted, all the voyage
 of their life
 Is bound in shallows
 and in miseries.
 On such a full sea
 are we now afloat,
 And we must take the
 current when it serves,
 Or lose our ventures.***

William Shakespeare
Julius Caesar Act 4 Sc 3
(217-223)

THE TIDE IS TURNING

The Bard of Avon was certainly not writing about the Academy (see quote at left), but the organisation is to see many of its new ventures meet fruition in 1997. We are on the brink of an exciting era of activities, which we believe will launch us on a series of 'tides of good fortune' to the benefit of all of our members and the communities which they serve.

The 'new-look' *South African Family Practice* is just one of these activities. Apart from the streamlined and more effective production machinery, we have a new full-time editor in the person of Russell Kirkby, who has a veritable cornucopia of stimulating articles and educational challenges planned for the year. A member of the Family Medicine Department at Pretoria University, he is also well-trained in pharmacology and sports medicine. I request you all to support our advertisers, as without their loyal support we could not bring this publication, and the others in our stable, to you.

The Academy has recently launched a major five-year programme in the form of the Rural Health Care Initiative, which we hope will reach over 18 million people in underserved areas of our country. Apart from a

comprehensive Rural Practitioner Education Programme, the central fulcrum of the initiative is the WONCA World Rural Health Congress, to be staged in Durban from 14-17 September. This event will be attended by leading practitioners at the cutting edge of 'country practice' from around the globe.

Underpinning the whole initiative is a communications network of computer and information technology. The network will link practitioners who are removed from the major centres, and city doctors, to sources of clinical data and learning.

This initiative has the support of the Ministry of Health, WHO and WONCA Africa. Your assistance in the planning, definition and funding of this initiative is welcomed and indeed sought.

The Academy will be undergoing major structural changes to give it more regional and local autonomy through the establishment of provincial councils and branch committees.

We believe that the Academy will be able to improve its service to its members through a more streamlined administration.

We are here to serve you! Let's hear from you! Best wishes for 1997, and see you all at Congress. ●