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JOURNAL POLICY

SA Family Practice is published monthly by the SA Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care.

It offers a voice to local family practice, placing original contributions from the research of family practitioners/primary health care workers as a priority. It aims at stimulating original research amongst family practitioners. The length of articles should preferably not exceed 2 000 words. References should be in accordance with the Vancouver system. Three copies of a contribution, typed in double spacing, should be submitted. Articles will be sent to expert referees before acceptance for publication. The journal also has an update or continuing education section, placing review articles that take cognizance of the information needs and frames of reference of primary health care clinicians. SA Family Practice further serves as the mouthpiece of the Academy. As such, meetings are reported on, along with other news.

Member of the
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ISSN 1025-1979

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A CHANGING WORLD

There is a constant call that we, as family practitioners, should be 'pro-active'. There is clamour from the Managed Care Coalition to join forces as one body, to group ourselves to prepare for the onslaught of managed care and the probable control that the managed care giants will impose, albeit in a subtle manner, upon ourselves and the patient.

Add to this an uncertainty regarding the health policy in this country, the concerns of the major role players in the health industry, and we have a veritable cauldron with a most unpalatable stew. People dislike change – let the status quo remain – is a frequent clamour. Medical practitioners too are unhappy to face anything which could mean a change in ways. A change in method of practice, a change as to who will control whom, the possible restriction on freedom of choice both for the patient and the medical practitioner – all of which is viewed with great circumspection.

In order to meet the challenges of a changing society, the family practitioner must adapt but not sacrifice the quality of care which is provided. Needs change, and additional support is required in order to assist in dealing with the changes.

Amidst all this, where does this place the Academy, and the Journal? What role should the Academy play in assisting the family practitioner in the quest to remain patient-centred when all around is falling?

The Academy must likewise meet the challenges, and has therefore embarked upon the Rural Health Initiative in order to play a role in addressing the provision of health care in the rural areas. The Journal too needs to be sure that it is playing a supportive role in this initiative, as well as providing the family practitioner with the necessary information and research. It is for this reason that the Journal too needs to examine the role which it is to fulfil as the official mouthpiece of the Academy. Accordingly, it was decided to combine the December and January issues in one to allow the Journal to examine the strategy for the future. Publication will resume in 1997 with a combined February/March edition and thereafter monthly. The Family Practice Manual will once again make its appearance in March, with a difference so as to meet the changing needs of the family practitioner.

Dr Russell Kirkby has been appointed as editor, and we look forward to a Journal of high standing under his guidance. I wish to convey the sincere thanks of the Journal Management Committee and the Academy to Dr Roy Jobson for acting as interim editor during the past five months, and look forward to his continued support of the Journal and the Academy's activities with as much vigour and dedication as he displayed during his term of office.

Change is challenging, and the Academy and the Journal must adapt to the changes so as to provide the support and information required by us as we move forward into the future. We look forward to exciting times ahead with growth of the discipline of family medicine in this country in such a way so as to more than meet the needs of the changing society in which we live.

DR GARTH BRINK
Chairman, Journal Management Committee