

REPORT TO THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

On 17 September, in his role as National Chairman of the Academy, Professor Bruce Sparks presented a report to the preliminary Portfolio Committee on Health. Apart from an appendix detailing the credentials of the Academy, the report outlines the Academy's experience in vocational training and other educational programmes, describes existing vocational training and comments on the Interim SAMDC's controversial proposal on vocational training.

The final section of the report documents the Academy's understanding of the proposals, its support for aspects of the proposals and, finally, its reservations and concerns about the proposals. This section of Professor Sparks' presentation is quoted in full.

The Academy's understanding of the proposals is as follows:

1. That there should be two years of vocational training for all doctors prior to their being allowed to practise in private general practice. (It is noted that in subsequent documents from the SAMDC, the term 'Independent Practice' is used. In discussion with members of Council, it is evident that this term implies 'private general practice'.)
2. Such training must be supervised.
3. The training is to be monitored by medical schools.

THE ACADEMY'S SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSALS

1. The Academy is most supportive of the concept of compulsory vocational training for family practitioners and therefore welcomes the proposals.
2. At a general meeting of the Academy held on 10 September 1996 it was resolved that the

organisation should host a strategic planning meeting of all existing vocational training stakeholders to develop a common understanding on the issues involved in vocational training for generalists, and to develop a strategy for its implementation.

3. The Academy offers its experience and expertise in this field of education and wishes to be involved in further developments.
4. It furthermore believes that vocational training for generalists must take into account existing legislation and should be integrated into existing vocational training programmes. It should be possible for vocational trainees to complete the existing Masters' programmes of university departments during the two-year training period.

THE ACADEMY'S RESERVATIONS AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE PROPOSALS

WHILE SUPPORTING THE CONCEPT IN PRINCIPLE, THE Academy has many reservations and

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concerns about the proposals of the SAMDC. Many of these it will address directly to the INMDCSA. However, the following are worth noting at this point:

1. That prior to its proposal and since then, there has been no consultation with the very persons within the discipline for whom the training is proposed – no family practitioner organisation has been approached in this regard, nor has any Department of Family Medicine been consulted.
2. It questions the need to establish a new form of vocational training for generalist 'independent practice' when there is an existing approved format, with formal training, in approved training sites, a system of supervision, and a formative and summative assessment in generalist practice (family medicine).
3. Why in the documentation is it indicated that vocational training only be applicable to those

wishing to enter private/independent practice? Surely all practitioners wishing to enter generalist care should be required to do such training? Surely doctors who will be practising alone or in semi-supervised or unsupervised clinics or hospitals in the public sector should be subject to the same training requirements? To not stipulate this would imply an element of compulsory community service. In addition, if the regulations only apply to those intending doing private practice, it seems that private patients are entitled to higher standards of care than the majority attending public services!*

4. The Academy believes that supervision of vocational training programmes should be by adequately trained family physicians.

* *In discussions with the President of the INMDCSA subsequent to this presentation, she has stated that vocational training will apply to all persons, not only those wishing to enter private general practice.*

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