
EDITORIAL

Continuing Certification

On the 21st and 22nd of February, Time Limited Certification was discussed from many angles at Broederstroom. This well-run workshop was organised by the College of Medicine of South Africa. The invited guests, Dr Allen Hewson from the Royal Australian College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists and Dr Harry Kimball from the American Board of Respiratory Physicians gave valuable input on recertification in their disciplines and countries.

Those attending were broadly representative. They were from the College Faculties, the MASA, the Universities, discipline-based societies, the SAMDC and various political health desks. In April '91 the SAMDC accepted the following motion:

"Council accepts the principle that persons registered with Council must

fulfil requirements laid down by Council regarding continuing professional education in order to remain so registered."

The workshop looked at the next step from this decision of Council. Prof Corneels Nel from Bloemfontein presented the argument that remaining up-to-date was important and that there is now good evidence to show that recertification can improve physician competence and patient outcomes. Prof Dinkie van Rensburg, a medical sociologist from Bloemfontein sounded some warning notes that there are several possible toxic effects of such a programme of recertification. If done without consideration for patient and community needs, it may merely push up the costs of medical care and further alienate medicine from society. Groups further debated the role of examinations as a means of determining who gets recertified, and the firm conclusion was a big NO. The workshop rather went for the Australian model where other forms of scoring points towards recertification was used.

These various activities were debated bearing in mind the experiences from both continents. They include such things as Continuing Medical Education, Quality Assurance Activities, Congresses, Courses and various forms of Self-Assessment and Self-Study.

The College of Medicine is going to collate the proceedings and recommendations of the workshop in the next few months and present it to

the SAMDC. The SAMDC is keen to make rapid progress and is likely to ask the various bodies active within each discipline to get together to draw up models and guidelines for their own groups before the principle decision becomes operative.

The Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care and SA Family Practice is ready to get involved along with other bodies to provide high quality CME towards gaining credit for recertification. Our new section, Essential CME starts next month. Hopefully we will be able to do it in a way that will promote better standards of health care for all in South Africa.



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Congress?