
EDITORIAL

The New Pharmacist

Two letters in this month's journal refer to the new style pharmacist who is able to sell medicines listed from schedule 3, 4 and 5 substances. This applies to pharmacists that have successfully completed a training course for the treatment of certain conditions and have been accredited as such by the SA Pharmacy Council.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare gave time for submissions with regard to the making of regulations in terms of section 35 of the Medicines and Related Substances Act, 1965 (Act no 101) as published in the Government Gazette of 25-6-93, notice R1091.

The Academy has supported the strong objection submitted by MASA to the Minister. The objections are that the regulations will be unlawful, not in the public interest and also that they are premature. The illegality hinges around the argument that the regulations will reverse a law that has been debated and promulgated in Parliament. The public interest is not served if the examination, diagnosis and treatment of patients are certified by the Pharmacy Board who themselves lack the necessary clinical background. The whole exercise is premature as there are various groups discussing the roles of the different professions involved in health care. It would be better for radical departures from the norm to be cleared at such forums prior to making new regulations and laws.

Erasmus, in his letter, argues that we need not fear competition if we are

delivering care of an appropriate standard. I would like to agree with him, if, "the playing field was levelled" and there was open competition, without people masquerading as something they are not.

This episode is however just another example of one of the health team aggressively promoting their own cause. Until the professions really start talking to one another in the presence of the public and in the public's interest, we will continue to waste everybody's time with fruitless activities that make no difference to the health of the people we claim to serve. My prediction is that this present effort will be shelved after an enormous waste of man-hours, and private and public funds at a time when there are far more important things to attend to.

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Reference:

1. Erasmus RJE. Letter. S Afr Fam Pract 1993; 14: 438