
EDITORIAL

Who gets the money?

There are many trying to get a ride on the bandwagon to the future of general practice. I've noticed three lately.

All readers of *SA Family Practice* are aware that many, if not most private practising and salaried family physicians feel they are not earning sufficient to maintain their families at even a modest level. We are just not able to afford the upbringing for our children that was possible for our forefathers.

I meet youngsters, school leavers, who have the perception that they are going to get rich writing computer programmes for doctors! At least four people have given me this story in the last six months.

Then there are consultant specialists from outside our discipline who have the nerve to, and have actually written computer run diagnostic programmes. These programmes are installed in pharmacies as primary health care facilities. Two recent referrals from such a centre perhaps illustrate a point. An eighteen year old black girl was rushed to casualty with a diagnosis of Angina Pectoris. The other was a two year old with the label Sexually Transmitted Disease.

Neither are total impossibilities but in both instances the diagnosis brought more trouble than help.

The last rider on the bandwagon is the economic saviour of the GP. As I opened the letter, the heavy black lines around the edge immediately gave me that funeral feel. The title mentioned, "general practitioner" and "finance". This seemed appropriate as so many of us feel that there has been a death in our financial parts. Let's read on, "In

order to address these issues and provide the general practitioner with some insight into future developments . . . From the airport you will be transported to one of the newest and most luxuriously appointed five star hotels." The venue is six hours by air across the ocean. The people who offer the opportunity suggest you bring your family and pay half the cost three months ahead of time and the total cost one month before the Forum to be held on Finance! There is not a single general practitioner on the programme.

Why are there so many trying to make money out of us when we do not have it? Are we giving society a double message or are these passengers on the bandwagon just crazy chancers?

Sam Johnson