

Starting 1996

To start with, SA Family Practice wishes each reader a good and rewarding 1996. The content of this issue revolves around the fashionable epidemic of our time – tiredness with many names! This is not what we wish for you to experience personally. On the other hand, we are here to deal with it. Perhaps we can try some hope, and rest, alongside hard work and worry which most seem to be so good at.

We also have to live with other realities. Howard Botha, our Academy's Past President and the first Professor of Family Medicine in South Africa, died in December. We are in a process of restructuring our health services towards a district health system. This time of change with its inevitable uncertainty calls for energy and commitment and is often frustrating.

Like so many good leaders, I am sure Howard would have faced 1996 with a positive attitude. He would look optimistically for the opportunities that present themselves for the family doctor and primary health care in this time of change.

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What are these opportunities? Some may be obvious but others need to be imagined and created by positive thinking and getting involved.

The word is out that State salaries are increasing substantially to stem the tide of people leaving the public sector. In this year we must find a way for the public and private sectors to co-operate and establish the district health system. Not only do we have the opportunity now to establish a universally available system but also one with higher standards of caring than what we have at present.

One challenge ahead this year is to make sure that family physicians have a recognised place in the district health system. The Department of Health is arranging a forum to discuss manpower for PHC in the DHS this month.

The Academy and Peter Cusins, our Chief Executive Officer, will be focussing on getting acceptance for the training of family physicians in the new DHS. If we achieve this, a considerable redistribution of resources toward PHC and underserved areas can be achieved.

Let us work for the establishment of a truly extensive National Vocational Training Programme by the end of this year.

In '96 we should also see greater clarity on the role managed care will play in the future.

Opportunities abound, let's grab them and get on with the future and banish tiredness while we salute the pioneer, Howard Parkin Botha! (More about him in February).

