
EDITORIAL

Opportunity

Never before has change been so inevitable in South Africa. Health is often an afterthought for politicians and cabinets. Presently, we enjoy a higher profile than usual. The lack of money to run existing services, the hospital strikes, the concern about the future of medical education and the initiatives of the Minister and Director General of the department of Health is making health more visible as a public issue.

All parties interested in a better future need to debate the issues seriously. Politically and financially the status quo is unacceptable and unaffordable. Our future can be worse or better depending on the inputs we all make.

SA FAMILY PRACTICE thus invites letters and articles to contribute to this debate.

To survive and do better than now, we need to redistribute the health rand of the State equitably.

This can no longer be done merely by increasing the budget. It will mean taking away from those who get more than the average and giving it to those who now get less than average. This will happen even if the have's are not getting enough in their view (Groote Schuur hospital for instance).

Greater effectivity for every patient in the country thus has to come by other means. Some savings can be diverted to patients by doing away with fragmentation. Perhaps even more beneficial, would be better management at all levels. Perhaps most hope can be placed on a restructuring of the health service, into one in which well managed primary care is in balance with greatly

diminished secondary and tertiary care, which has been properly regionalised and rationalised. Great savings can come from managing patients at the optimal level of care.

There are many obstacles to a better future. Apart from the inevitable struggle against vested interest, we also struggle with our vocabulary. Primary Health Care is offered as a solution, glibly, by all and sundry. However, we don't mean the same thing by it. We need a greater level of shared meaning and aims to make headway.

We await your comment.

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