

Masters in General Practice

There are some magnificent general practitioners in our country, there are also many excellent ones and most of the rest are thoroughly competent family physicians. These doctors have mastered their art on an individual basis with very little assistance from the recognised medical institutions. Of course they obtained a good scientific undergraduate training. They have also managed to glean some information and get some help in regard to the valid approach to problems in primary care from ad hoc post graduate instruction. Mostly however, they had to hone their special skills by dint of constant self instruction.

The state of the art of general practice now needs to be determined and guidelines set for future practitioners to prevent them wasting many years traversing the same paths their peers have had to travel to reach their state of competence. They need also to know that the standards they have accepted come up to the expectations of their peers.

Nobody but a general practitioner can determine the service quality required from a competent family doctor. We must now identify those amongst us with special interests and qualifications and experience to guide us in setting the mores for the various areas and problems in primary care medicine.

It is difficult to enumerate the many skills required by a doctor in the front line of patient contact. They vary from the ability to cope with a too heavy workload, to trying to reduce the weight of patients in a sophisticated urban population; from administering anaesthetics, to testing eyesight; from treating a sore throat, to counselling a patient with an incurable disease.

We, the SA Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care and the National GP Group of MASA, have undertaken to determine acceptable norms for general practice methods and attitudes. In the next few years we hope to assemble representative experts in different areas of general practice. After in-depth research and discussion we will publish the findings and final recommendations of this group. This will in fact represent a peer review by people with appropriate credentials and their opinions should thus enjoy impeccable credibility.

On the next page we have produced a form for practitioners to fill in if they feel that they can contribute to our venture. Please send this back to us as quickly as possible, because we are anxious to start erecting the framework for our extensive undertaking as soon as we can. We have started by selecting diverse problem areas.

George Davie