

## WONCA and the Academy

The World Organisation of National Colleges, Academies and Academic Associations of General Practitioners/Family Physicians, not surprisingly called WONCA in short, is a growing fellowship. WONCA now represents over 100 000 practitioners scattered over cities, towns and villages in many countries. The Academy is recognised, by WONCA, as the representative body for family practice in South Africa. No other discipline can claim such a widespread distribution close to the heart of the human community.

The achievements of bringing such a large number of family practitioners together internationally and nationally belongs to past leaders of WONCA and of national family practice organisations who became involved without thought of reward.

The main thrust and activities of WONCA and the national bodies has brought family practice into the mainstream of concern for the health of our communities. The family practitioner must be the advocate for the best interests of our communities and for what is best for the health care of the people in our communities, and to advance the cause of family practice for the improvement of society.

Another important achievement has been the creation of a spirit of fellowship, the exchange of experiences and the many new friendships.

Through the exchange of experiences with colleagues worldwide, the South African Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care has laid down the academic infrastructure for effective family practice in this country and given it direction in undergraduate training, vocational training, continuing medical education and research. Not surprisingly, the Academy has become the largest medical

academic body of any one discipline because it is meeting the needs of family practitioners in this country.

These activities of the Academy will eventually affect, directly or indirectly, every family practitioner in this country whether he or she is in the public or private sectors, working in an urban or rural setting.

To those practitioners who are not members of the Academy we say - join and help us advance the cause of family practice for your benefit and that of your patients and our country. We need you.

To those practitioners who are members we say - go out of your way to talk to your colleagues who are not yet members, about the expanding role of the Academy and especially about the help that is needed for vocational training, about continuing medical education through small group discussions and the need for help in family practice research.

Family practice is where 90% of the medical action takes place each day and where 90% of the problems can be resolved simply, effectively and inexpensively. Family practice will always need well-trained practitioners to make diagnostic sense of the confusing array of signs and symptoms that makes up much of this work.

What role the family practitioners will play in future planning of health care will depend on the constructive academic expertise we will be able to contribute to the subject through our personal experiences.

That is what the Academy is all about and why it needs us all, because we are in a unique position of having our patients' trust and are closest to the heart of the human community in which we live.

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