



From the editor · Van die redakteur

A double edge . . .

Our congress in the city of gold has the theme Skills in General Practice. Studies looking at what patients require of their doctors show that patients value expertise and skill very highly! They do not only want a nice guy – they expect an adequate level of competence as well. Doctors and patients will therefore agree that the time spent from 14 to 18 April 1986 at the Fifth General Practitioners Congress updating and learning new skills appropriate to family practice/primary care will be time well spent.

The conference menu is varied and include skills of how to do certain things as well as how to be a certain kind of doctor or person. It is important for all doctors but crucial for us as generalists to maintain the balance between being and doing. Some say that one can not learn to be different from the way one was born – if I was born with the 'gift' to miscommunicate and make other people nervous and uncomfortable, there is nothing I can do about it, and my patients just have to learn to get on with me.

I side with the many others who maintain that one can learn the skill of growing positively as a person and learn new attitudes and patterns of reaction to oneself and one's patients. Skills of a more technical nature, the skills of doing, can become very harmful in our hands if these are not tempered by the right quality of being. We are all aware of the danger of a general practitioner or consultant surgeon who knows how to perform an operation rather well, but does not always know when to do it or how to best care for the person being operated on before or after the event.

We have gone a full circle from the First General Practitioners Congress in 1978, and are back in Johannesburg for the Fifth General Practitioners Congress in 1986. Although a Pretoria committee is organising the Congress a big enough venue to house all the delegates and functions in one place in

that city was not available. Much growth has taken place in the intervening years. The Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care was formed at the Second General Practitioners Congress in 1980, and has grown to a membership of 1 400. The precursor of this Journal was also started in the same year by Thompsons Publications under the editorship of George Davie.

In 1983 the Academy took over the Journal from Thompsons and relaunched it in January 1984. Today we start with a new look to *SA Family Practice*. We hope you will like it and let us know how you find the changes. We can do with constructive criticism, and some encouragement might even help the Journal to best serve the interest of all those in Family Practice/Primary Care.

We wish all attending the Fifth General Practitioners Congress a happy and stimulating time of learning and sharing with colleagues. Those unable to attend will be kept informed of what happened, as papers read at the Congress will appear in future editions of *SA Family Practice*.

Sam Felsen

Reference:

1. Pistorius GJ. 'n Analise van die werksaamhede van 'n huisartspraktyk. M.D.-proefskrif. Pretoria: Universiteit van Pretoria, 1983.