

The Academy, the National GP Group and Dispensing

This issue of SA Family Practice contains an insert and membership form from the National General Practitioners Group of MASA. How does the Academy relate to the NGPG? Why so many bodies? Basil Jaffe the President of the Academy has clearly stated the objectives of the SA Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care.¹ There is no need to repeat what he has said so competently.

Perhaps foremost; these two bodies are co-operating and supplementing one another. They are not in opposition. That we are planning the April 1986 GP Congress in association with the NGPG is ample evidence of this co-operation. Presently we are jointly concerned about the approach the SA Medical and Dental Council is taking with the issue of Dispensing practices.

The Academy has as central concern, the promotion of academic standards in Family Practice and to ensure improved primary care for all in Southern Africa. The NGPG though also active in continuing education in some of its sub-group areas, is mainly concerned with medico-political issues.

The issues surrounding dispensing do not fall clearly into either the academic or political camp. Pharmacy lobbyists and their propaganda campaign try to discredit dispensing doctors by labelling them traders. They place the problem purely in the politico-economic area.

There are other facets as expressed by Kruger recently.² It still is not clear how they plan to give

a better and more cost effective service to patients. It is unlikely that all dispensing doctors are above blame. The same can however be said of pharmacists. There are fallible human beings in both camps. The mud-slinging is not going to help patients. Too many voices on both sides are not arguing from the patients point of view. It is highly desirable that we as family practitioners function as the patients advocate. It would be ridiculous to advertise this on television and do the opposite. Our advertisement should in the first place be our track record. Do patients get a better deal from us?

The Academy is concerned that the outcome of the present round of battles will leave many patients worse off if their doctors are forced out of dispensing. Some small towns may even lose their doctors. Interestingly, there seems to be no outcry about all the dispensing nurses and doctors in the public sector. They surely outnumber the dispensing doctors in private practice. Why is there so little concern about them? If the pharmacists were really concerned about the patients this would be a very fertile area for service to the community.

To return to the Academy and the NGPG. We co-operate. We may not always agree. Some phrases in the inserted newsletter would not be put similarly by the Academy. We have much more in common though and build on that.

REFERENCES:

1. Jaffe B. Editorial. *SA Fam Pract* 1985; 6: 130.
2. Kruger JT. Letter. *SA Fam Pract* 1985; 6: 220.