

# The Core Doctor

A strong contingent from each of our medical schools met in Durban from 8 to 10 May 1985 at the Annual Conference of the South African Association for Medical Education, SAAME.

Delegates spent the first two days discussing problems facing South African medical schools in four workshops under the able overall guidance of Prof Ken Cox from Australia. On the last day his excellent keynote address on measuring the efficacy of medical education and medical care was followed by research papers from local speakers. These were of a good standard and evidence of serious work in this field. The full proceedings have been promised to us soon.

The conclusion of the workshop on, "What kind of end product should we have?", is of major importance to Family Medicine in South Africa. The final agreed definition reads as follows:

"The core doctor should have acquired the appropriate scientific knowledge, clinical and communicative skills and attitudes to enable him to identify and comprehensively manage

common and life-threatening conditions important in all Southern African contexts, recognising his limitations and ethical responsibilities. He should have the motivation to remain a student and become a teacher."

If this definition is taken seriously then it should have three consequences:

- All disciplines, including Family Medicine/Primary Care, should have a balanced input into undergraduate teaching.
- Vocational training for Family Practice/Primary Care will become universally available and possibly mandatory.
- The concept of a medical school will have to broaden out from its present limitation to tertiary care hospitals into one in which it is present in the total spectrum of the health care system including medicine at the level of the community.

We can only watch with bated breath to see what will happen. Let's hope we're not cyanotic, cold and rigid by the time things happen!