

Comment

by Prof Sam Fehrsen MBChB, MFAP (SA)

Workshop: The role of the doctor in Primary health care in Southern Africa

On the 21st and 22nd March 1983, the Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care hosted a workshop in Pretoria. The workshop's main consideration was discussion of the role of the Doctor in Primary Health Care in South Africa.

Many of those present had previously attended similar meetings, the outcomes of which consisted only of reports of the meetings. It is the express wish of the Academy Council and of those who attended the recent workshop that this should not be our fate once again.

We therefore invite both debate and action on the basic premises underlying the final resolution of the workshop, the full report of which appears on page 18.

Some of these premises may be summarised as follows:

- Family Practitioners/General Practitioners/Doctors in Primary Health Care are all basically working by the same principles requiring identical training. This training needs to be complemented by further training appropriate to the area and type of work eventually chosen. There is a need to spell this out more clearly. Indeed, a further attempt to do so was made at the workshop.

- The *de facto* position of a graduate of a South African Medical School is that after the year of Internship, the graduate is basically a doctor who may choose to be vocationally trained into many of the fields open in medical practice. The *de jure* position is that this person is a General Practitioner.
- The most pressing doctor problem in Southern Africa at present is not the number of doctors practising, but rather their distribution.
- The distribution of doctors is materially affected by their vocational training. Vocational training in Family Practice gives the trainee confidence to practice in this field. In addition the locality of such training influences a significant number of trainees to settle in the area.

Suggestions concerning the nine resolutions arising from the workshop are most welcome. Please direct them to the Secretary, SA Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care, Medical House, Central Square, Pinelands 7430. □