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An extract from the presidential address by Dr BM Fehler (President of the Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care) at the opening session of the third General Practice Congress held at Sun City, Bophuthatswana, 9-12 August, 1982. The full text of the speech will be published in the September issue of Family Practice.

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**T**hirty years ago, we the General Practitioners, were an unrecognised group of doctors and were at the lowest stop in the medical hierarchy in South Africa. The achievements of the General Practitioner were unrecognised and he received little or no respect from his colleagues and patients. However, the young General Practitioners of that era fought and strove for recognition, particularly from the academics at the medical schools.

The General Practitioners of South Africa have made tremendous strides since 1958. We are recognised in the international field as being General Practitioners of the highest ability, our standards of practice are equal to any in the world.

Let us not be complacent for these achievements, both in South Africa and overseas, as they have been made only by a few devoted and interested General Practitioners — it is time that you, the General Practi-

tioners — particularly the young energetic Practitioner — take part actively in your discipline by joining the various committees of the Academy. We have reached a stage in our development where the older members of the Committee should act in an advisory capacity and leave the handling of the Committees to the younger members of the Academy.

In General Practice there are three major educational policies which should be implemented to improve our status as well as our patient care.

Firstly, vocational training for the General Practitioner should be made a statutory requirement for doctors who intend entering General Practice.

Secondly, each university should establish departments of General Practice — the chair of the University of the Witwatersrand is now a reality and very soon will be advertised.

Thirdly, it is the belief of the Academy that the competence of its

members can be fully measured by the examination as presented by the College of Medicine of South Africa. Hopefully this examination will be improved and expanded to the level of the General Practitioner Colleges overseas.

Primary care/general practice is an essential level of care in all health systems and must form the basis of all medicinal care; to provide excellent Primary Health Care we require: clear definitions of roles and objectives; effective education for those entering and those already in practice; appropriate numbers of Primary Care Physicians and supportive staff; adequate premises and facilities for diagnosis and treatment; supportive hospital facilities; stimulating incentives and rewards; sabbatical leave and attendance at courses overseas; ongoing research and evolution is essential for the future development of Family Medicine in South Africa. □