

Comment Komentaar

by Dr. George Davie



In all non-socialist countries private enterprise and state institutions work side by side and in fact every now and again compete for the same customer. By the rules of the game the state should however enjoy no unfair advantage.

The realm of medicine complicates the problem for itself because medical men cannot accept that profit is the main concern.

Their overriding principle is humanitarian concern and precludes taking advantage of human discomfort.

The state has the duty to supply a service to the less fortunate. This service is financed by the taxes levied on private enterprise and the private practitioner thus also contributes to the communal pool.

When does a patient become the responsibility of the state?

If a group of people cannot support medicine in a private enterprise context they have to be supported by state coffers.

If however you have an economically heterogeneous population how do you separate those who can afford the private practitioner from those who cannot?

A possible solution is for the state to establish community health centres manned by private practitioners on a part-time basis.

This seemingly simple solution nevertheless is teeming with practical and philosophical problems.

Because the Medical Association is ever alert to new developments this

situation is being looked into very carefully at present.

If you are one of the people involved in these pilot schemes that could be very important to the future of family medicine in the republic your experience would be very valuable to Dr Johan Schutte of Vanderbijlpark tel: (016) 335260 who has undertaken to study the situation.

The juggernaut of bureaucracy is a dangerous machine and where the ground allows it the advance can be frightening.

All that may deflect its encroachment on family practice is a strong structure based on the special service a competent and caring practitioner offers the family.