

Comment Kommendaar

Ministerial insight

The seventies were marked by a continuous and unnecessary struggle between the medical profession and one Remuneration Commission after the other.

In spite of widespread optimism that the beginning of the new decade would usher in a golden era for the entire country, for doctors, the eighties began to the sound of distant thunder, and it seemed as if the current parliamentary session would constitute the final, devastating storm.

However, it has now fortunately become known that the Minister of Health has abandoned the idea of implementing legislation that would have destroyed our profession, stripping us totally of any semblance of autonomy.

We all owe the Minister a great debt of gratitude for his latest statement. We accept that he took the final decision himself, but it is beyond doubt that it took a great deal of persuasion to make him reconsider his attitude.

The Medical Association of South Africa, acting as mouthpiece for the profession, won the day with well-considered arguments — that is unquestionable.

We wish to render our congratulations together with our heartfelt thanks to the Executive Committee of the Federal Council as well as the Secretariat for the gigantic task that they have accomplished.

The Medical Association has again proved itself as a body of the highest integrity. The most valuable lesson that we have learned through the unnecessary debacle of the past months, is the importance of keeping a cool head in negotiations such as these, never deserting our basic democratic principles.

To conclude, the lessons learned through this confrontation should not be buried in the archives and forgotten. The most apparent and vital lesson is that a pure lack of communication could lead to a misunderstanding that was almost catastrophic to the medical profession. We must

make an earnest attempt to put this matter right in the immediate future.

Willie Pietersen

Ministeriele insig

Die jare sewentig was gekenmerk deur 'n voortdurende stryd en nodelose worsteling wat deur die mediese profesie gevoer is met die een na die ander Vergoedingskommissie.

Die jare tagtig het ten spyte van vooruitsigte van 'n "goue" tydperk vir die land, vir die medici weereens begin met die gerammel van donderweer en dit het gelyk of die huidige parlement-sitting die laaste verwoestende haelbui sou wees.

Dit is egter nou gelukkig bekend dat die Minister van Gesondheid afgesien het van sy beoogde vernietigende wetgewing wat ons finaal sou stroop van ons outonomie. Oor die jongste verklaring van die Minister is ons almal aan hom baie dank verskuldig.

Ons aanvaar dat die finale beslissing deur die Minister self geneem is, maar dat dit sekerlik oortuigingswerk gekos het om hom — die Minister — van sienswyse te laat verander, is nie te betwyfel nie.

Hier kan dit nie ander wees as die Mediese Vereniging van Suid-Afrika as mondstuk van die profesie, wat met weldeurdagte argumente die deurslaggewende faktor was in die besluitverandering nie.

Ons heelhartige gelukwensing te same met ons dank gaan aan die Uitvoerende Komitee van die Federale Raad asook aan die Amptenary vir die reuse taak wat verrig is.

Hieruit vloei ook die feit dat die Mediese Raad hom sigself weereens as 'n liggaam van hoogstaande integriteit bewys het. Die belangrikste les wat uit die onnodige debakel van die afgelope maande te leer is, is dat die goeie strategie is om in sulke onderhandelinge "koelkop" te bly en vas te staan by elementere demokratiese beginsels.

'n Laaste gedagte is dat die lesse wat uit hierdie konfrontasie geleer is, nie in die argiewe van die vergetelheid weggebreë sal word nie. Die vernaamste en mees ooglopende les is dat 'n gebrek aan kommunikasie gelei het tot 'n misverstand wat amper katastrofies was vir die mediese profesie. Hierdie saak moet in die onmiddellike toekoms met groot erns reggestel word.

Willie Pietersen



Dr Willie Pietersen

S.A. Family Practice: The family doctor's journal

Up until now, G.P.s in South Africa have been able to communicate directly with one another only by means of newsletters.

Journals intended for the medical fraternity as a whole only fulfilled a small part of the educational and medico-political needs of the primary physician.

Thomson Publications accurately gauged the need for a more relevant journal for the family doctor. Thus was born "Southern African Family Practice/Huisartspraktijk S.A.", a journal distinguished by the fact that it only publishes material produced by and for doctors in a South African context.

Its editor, Dr George Davie, has been in active general practice for over twenty years, and for the past 10 years has been responsible for the production of 'ELAN', the highly successful newsletter for G.P.s. He is also an executive member of the National G.P. Group of the Medical Association of South Africa, and the Faculty of General Practice of the College of Medicine of S.A.

He is ably assisted by Drs Willie Pietersen and Boz Fehler, both of whom are well-known throughout the country, and feature prominently in G.P. affairs.

Managing editor of the journal is Leon du Plessis, previously medical writer for the Citizen. His more than 20 years of technical journalistic expertise will ensure a high standard in the final product.

Comment Kommentaar

An Academy for the primary physicians

General practitioners, those doctors responsible for frontline medical care of unselected patients, have for many years felt the need for a communal meeting-place.

The people who belong to this category of the medical hierarchy include doctors who work in day hospitals, district surgeons, school doctors, mission hospital doctors, doctors in all kinds of clinics as well as those general practitioners who practise in cities and the rural areas. They have all felt the need to communicate with one another.

Existing official bodies have, of course, partly satisfied this need.

A primary physician can, naturally, be an active member of the National General Practitioners' Group of the Medical Association of South Africa, a body that has done much for doctors in general, and general practitioners in particular.

We hope to see its arm strengthened by even greater support in the future. But from time to time, it becomes apparent that a group of general practitioners who enjoyed more autonomy might handle certain situations in a different way.

The Faculty of General Practice of the College of Medicine of South Africa is a body which has already managed to establish a Membership Examination for general practitioners which may be registered by the South African Medical and Dental Council as an additional qualification. However, entrance to the College is only possible on passing an examination, and this examination does not guarantee full voting rights within the college.

These and other considerations led to the meeting of representative doctors from all over the country, who met to discuss the need for a new group. Here the idea of an Academy for General Practice/Primary Care was born. This Academy would attempt to provide for the needs of any primary physician in terms of service to his patients, and appropriate continuing education, regardless of the type of practice he is involved in.

There can be no doubt that the motivation to bring about this academy will have to be powerful. It will require considerable effort merely to convince the existing bodies that they have not fallen short, and that there is no intention to compete with them.

A new movement is always threatening to someone. However, an Academy such as this could mean a great deal for all the patients of our country, if the enthusiasm for rendering excellent care to all of our people remains as high as it was at that historic meeting of dedicated doctors last month in Johannesburg.

George Davie

'n Akademie vir die primere arts

Vir jare al voel algemene praktisyns, daardie dokters wat verantwoordelik is vir die eerste linie lewering van mediese dienste aan die ongeselekteerde pasiënt, dat daar nie 'n gemeenskaplike vergaderplek vir hulle is nie.

Dokters wat in daghospitale werk, distriksgeneeshere, skooldokters, sendingdokters, kliniekdokters van enige aard asook stedelike en plattelandse huisartse is almal behorende tot hierdie spesiale groep binne in die mediese hiërargie, en voel dikwels die behoefte om onderling te kommunikeer.

Daar is natuurlik gevestigde organisasies wat hierdie behoefte deels bevredig. So kan 'n primêre arts 'n aktiewe lid wees van die Algemene Praktisynsgroep van die Suid-Afrikaanse Mediese Vereniging.

Hierdie liggame het deur die jare baie vermag vir dokters in die algemeen en vir die huisarts veral en ons beveel aan dat die vereniging in die toekoms nog deur groter getalle ondersteun word om sy arm te versterk.

Elke nou en dan was dit egter duidelik dat 'n groep huisartse wat meer outonomie geniet het sekere situasies dalk anders sou hanteer het.

Die Fakulteit van Algemene Praktijk van die Kollege van Geneeskunde van Suid-Afrika is eweneens 'n liggaam wat dit reeds reggekry het om 'n medelidmaatskapspeksamen vir

huisartse daar te stel wat by die Suid-Afrikaanse Mediese en Tandheelkundige Raad registreerbaar is as 'n bykomstige kwalifikasie.

Maar hier ongelukkig is nou die nadeel dat toegang tot die Kollege tans slegs d.m.v. 'n eksamen geskied en ook dat slaging van hierdie eksamen nie volle stemreg binne die Kollege verleen nie.

Al hierdie dinge en nog meer het bygedra tot die vergadering van verteenwoordigende dokters vanoor die land wat bymekaar gekom het om die behoefte aan 'n nuwe groep te bespreek. Hier is die begrip van 'n Akademie vir Huisartskunde/Primere sorg gebore.

Hierdie Akademie sou probeer voorsien aan die behoeftes van 'n primêre arts, waar ook al hy hom bevind, ten opsigte van dienslewering aan die pasiënt en toepaslike voortgesette opleiding.

Daar word nie betwyfel dat die dryfkrag vir so 'n onderneming sterk sal moet wees nie. Om slegs die reeds bestaande liggame te oortuig dat hulle nie te kort geskied het nie, of dat daar nie nou met hulle meegeding gaan word nie, sal heelwat energie opgebruik.



'n Nuwe beweging is maar altyd vir iemand 'n bedreiging. So 'n Akademie mag egter op die lang duur baie beteken vir die pasiënte van ons land indien die entoesiasme om 'n goeie mediese diens aan ons hele volk te lewer so hoog bly soos tydens die geskiedkundige vergadering van toegewyde dokters verlede maand in Johannesburg.

George Davie