

Sayings, proverbs & art in health education!

OPSOMMING:

Die belang van die doeltreffende gebruik van tradisioneel aanvaarbare maniere om gesondheidsvoorligting oor te dra by die ongeletterde word bespreek. Pogings tot sinvolle gebruik van metodes reeds verloor deur die "beskawing" word geskets.

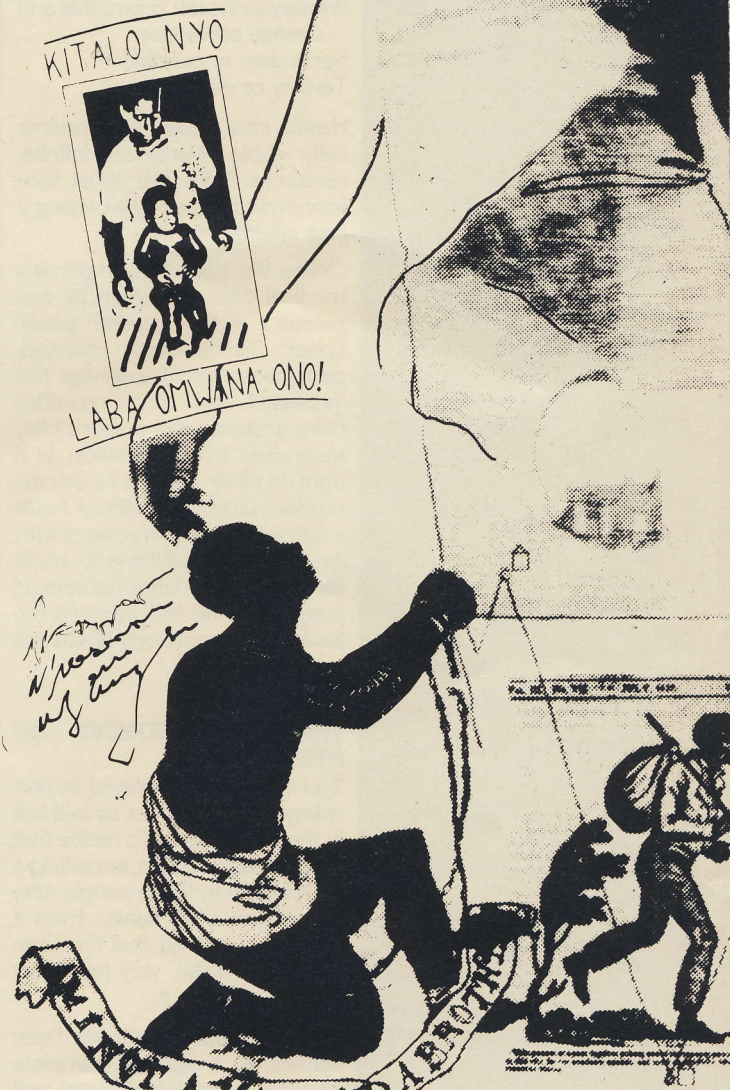


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This article is an edited transcript by Prof G.S. Fehrsen of his interview with Dr. M.A. Church, lecturer in the Nutrition Department of the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine of the University of London. He grew up in East Africa and returned after training to work in Uganda in the Department of Child Health at the Makerere University College. He was at the Nutrition Rehabilitation unit there.

G.S.F. Can you tell us something about the use of sayings and proverbs in Health Education?

M.A.C. Yes. I became particularly aware of the value of sayings and proverbs from the use of these in the context of Uganda with groups of people most of whom were illiterate. For myself it was an important educative experience in that I had to attempt to sit where people sat and imagine what it would be like not to be able to reach for a book from the shelf, not be able to reach for my pen or



my pencil out of my pocket and write something down. If you think like that those of us who have become totally dependant on the written word whether in print or what we write ourselves, it makes you realise how important other cues are for both the storing and retrieval of knowledge. In the context of Uganda, one of those forms that became very apparent was the proverb. The proverb in any country tends to express a body of knowledge. I view this with a picture of a coat peg. A coat peg has the facility for hanging

old coats on but has also the potential for including new ones and I think that a proverb has much the same function. From it hangs many things which pertain to the wisdom, the culture, past experience of any group. It is also open ended and does not contain a closed body of knowledge within it. The assumption is that it will continue to be a reference point to new experience and I think that from a point of view of Health Education it is a perception of this reality which is very important. Many people view the



Health Education situation from the point of view of coming into something to wipe out the past and to supplant a new and better way in its place. On very few occasions has this approach actually worked very well. I don't think psychologically that it is even possible.

Proverbs are one of the range of different ways of which knowledge is both held and transmitted. There are for instance stories and story telling riddles and songs to name a few. It is not

surprising that we find in places like Africa that all of these kinds of activities are a very real part of life.

Story tellers, song writers and singers are prized for their skill at doing that. What is important about the proverb and to some extent the riddle too is that they are in the daily activity of many people. Certainly many a conversation in Uganda will be started off and orientated around a proverb.

Very often the proverb would be explained appropriate to an

experience that somebody was actually having or had recently had and then the new experience would be related to the truth contained in the old proverb.

G.S.F. It is interesting that you say that, A.C. Jordan writing on story telling in Southern Africa said, that story telling is done in the same way, around a theme that is repeated through the ages. In fact you can't translate story telling to a written form because every time the story is told it is a new story because you've got new people

listening and new people reacting. The story is not the kind of story we know in our culture where you have a written down story which is always the same. M.A.C. In a way this is part of what we have lost with the advantages of printing, we have lost the flexibility of the spoken tradition and this is one of the things that one has for instance very much appreciated when you look at classical music in western culture which prizes itself in being written down. And then you suddenly find another culture like the

Indian culture. You have music which is many, many hundreds of years older than any of our oldest classical music. Their unbroken traditions of Ragai's Indian music which goes back reputedly two thousand years at least and something older that has never been written down. In a way this is a cultural affront to the western mind. But within the eastern cultures the great thing about the Rhaga is that it has a format which is learnt from a simple sequence of notes and rhythm, but there are never any two performances of any ragas which are the same. Because extemporisation is built into the tradition. I think this is a parallel to what you are talking about. There are core stories which themselves become re-enacted on each occasion, and I perceive in this a very valuable cross cultural reality which I think the west in fact has lost. The fact that there is an important reality in something which is unrehearsed, that you can actually lose by having things written down. After all many of the stories that we now have written in children's books and so on were themselves part of a long verbal tradition before somebody wrote them down. Now we come to revere the printed word in such a way that we feel somehow ashamed of changing the story for ourselves, don't you think?

G.S.F. Sure. Perhaps you can come now to some specific examples to illustrate the points you've made.

M.A.C. A clearer example of the value of the use of a proverb came into the very name of the nutrition rehabilitation unit in which I worked. The name of any unit which one runs is important and I think this is more so in places like Africa. It was perceived that nutrition rehabilitation will be a quite inappropriate word on a popular level. In an attempt to find something which would be appropriate, somebody came up with a word from a proverb and the name "Mwanamugimu" was used. The proverb that it came from in Luganda goes "Mwanamugimu ava ku ngozi" and it is a beautiful example of the richness and the inventiveness of the tradition. The word "mwanamugimu" itself has no direct translation into English. Many words in proverbs are characteristically like this, they have a fantastic richness in meaning. When we asked people what "mwanamugimu" meant they would give us many explanations. Each would in a sense enrich the word further. It has very deep roots so that if we

veranda of the unit; "Mwanamugimu", there would be an automatic reflex response from the crowd, "ava ku ngozi" ...

I suppose the nearest meaning in English is "Bonny Baby" but people would say things like, o yes, it is the child with bright eyes — a child who is happy and runs about — the child with curly black hair — a child who is alert — a child with a very nice skin, in other words many, many qualifications will be made and the proverb altogether roughly means the beautiful baby or the bonny baby comes from a good beginning.

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Another very rich word within the proverb is the word "ngosi" on which the proverb ends. In Uganda this has two distinct meanings: One applies to the foetal membranes and the other applies to the cloth in which a child is carried on a mother's back. For myself, the discovery of the meanings was very exciting because it is an example of synthesis within traditional thinking. Here in fact in Uganda we have the synthesis between pregnancy and early child rearing in a very beautiful way, the wrapping of the child in the womb is seen in the same light as the wrapping of the baby on the back. In a way it highlights the division which has come with western specialization having obstetrics and paediatrics. And we know that very many of our current problems in rearing children in a western world is because of the critical interplay between them, the fact that obstetricians lose interest after the birth of the baby and the paediatricians take an interest in those children who have already become sick. In many ways the manner in which the birth is handled by the obstetrician has very powerful effects on the future mothering process particularly relating to the success or otherwise of breast feeding. So here we have for me, a very good example of a way in which African traditional knowledge has brought a synthesis where the western analytical process has created specialization and a breakdown. The value of this proverb perhaps needs to be seen in the context of a working day. To any Buganda approaching the unit the name has a familiar connotation for a

start. It has very deep roots so that it we said to any group sitting on the veranda of the unit; "Mwanamugimo", there would be an automatic reflex response from the crowd, "ava ku ngozi", and like a break in jazz you set the scene for your discussion. No-one is excluded from this process and the ones who are particularly important to this are the elderly there.

Many people have regarded the elderly, the grannies and the grandpas as being way outside beyond the health education process. They have the view that

they are so set in their ways that there is no chance of change. I in fact think exactly the other way round, that's a reflection of a pattern of teaching which doesn't relate to grannies and grandpas, but here with the proverb you've got the exact converse in any group sitting here on the verandah, the grannies would be the ones in the greatest place of authority to tell us what, "mwanamugimo ava ku ngozi" means. We found that on many occasions that it worked out exactly so, they would be the ones who would immediately respond, and give us the fullest riches on its meaning and become immediately part of the discussion process so that now you've not got the classic example of the teachers standing up and telling people, but you've begun to get discussion.

Now this particular unit where I worked, in fact had children referred from the medical outpatients department with clinical malnutrition and the children were right there or there were black and white pictures of children with us to discuss, so we threw down a challenge. We said, "well if this wisdom of yours is so marvellous what's gone wrong?" Here is a problem, "Are these children the "Mwanamugimo children?", and everybody would say, "no, of course they are not the "Mwanamugimo children," as these children with frank malnutrition obviously were not. The challenge was now back to the group to think, O.K., if wisdom is true then there must be something that has gone wrong within the roots that were operating with these children. But then looking at the picture of malnutrition

again, the typical ones would contain a further well recognised dilemma. The mother with the frankly malnourished child would as often as not have another baby with her but a young one on the breast and very often this one young child on the breast would in fact be the "Mwanamugimo". It would often be a very bonny beautiful baby and growing, with black hair. So in a way the dilemma, is a dilemma with the good and the bad within it.

I think that this truth is in fact pertinent to very many cultures. You have components of cultures which are beneficial and you have costs, which are also part of the cultures and I think it's an arrogance of culture that many people have that they feel that they have nothing to learn from other people. I personally believe, in the exact converse as one has more effective communication between cultures, then one becomes enriched in both directions. The Europeans who ever came to our unit were reasonably challenged with the vision of the very well nourished child on the breast with the realization that in fact it is mothers of many more traditional societies who are the experts now at early infant rearing.

They have the greatest success in breast feeding and are the ones who have the greatest intimacy in early child contact and a good example of what the "ngosi" is, the cloth that the child is carried in. Certainly in East Africa and I believe in West Africa too it is very rarely found to be soiled despite the fact that the children do not wear nappies and the answer, I've heard for this is that the mothers have that degree of intuition between the relationship with the children that they know when they're going to urinate so that they in fact take them off the back at that point. Now many Europeans find it very difficult even to imagine that that degree of intuition and non-verbal communication can occur, so I feel we have a great deal in the West to learn and be enriched from these traditions. But then you say, okay, obviously, the elder child, has something gone badly wrong with the weaning period?

In a very real way Western children do not characteristically have severe weaning problems, malnutrition is not a wide-spread problem of weaning children, so we may in fact then ask the question, are there benefits are there components are there aspects of child weaning which can be taught which can be passed on to societies where obviously there is

a manifest weaning problem. Certainly in the Ugandan context we felt there was and that the analysis of the nature of the pattern of weaning revealed that a much fuller and more complete use of existing foodstuffs could be used. In many ways the child weaned on to the local staple which was usually served for the family and would be dipped into a soup of a relish. This meant that the small child would be weaned onto this as its first food, a thick and rather bulky food and with most of the components of the relish unavailable to the baby because it was not prepared in a way that was suitable to him. We also found the very well recognised deception that the child can reach satiety, his hunger can be satisfied by this kind of food before his energy/protein needs have been satisfied. As far as the mothers are concerned, we found in Uganda that they were not aware of this very real problem because they noted that their children would eat the food and that they stopped eating when their hunger was satisfied and they stopped crying, stopped complaining. As far as they were concerned the feeding process was quite adequate, serving the perceived need for food.

The proverbs thus opened the discussion involving even the elderly and enabled us to get to grips with the fundamental issues at stake.

G.S.F. You mention black and white pictures, did you find pictures and illustrations useful? Aren't there perceptual and other difficulties here in rural areas?

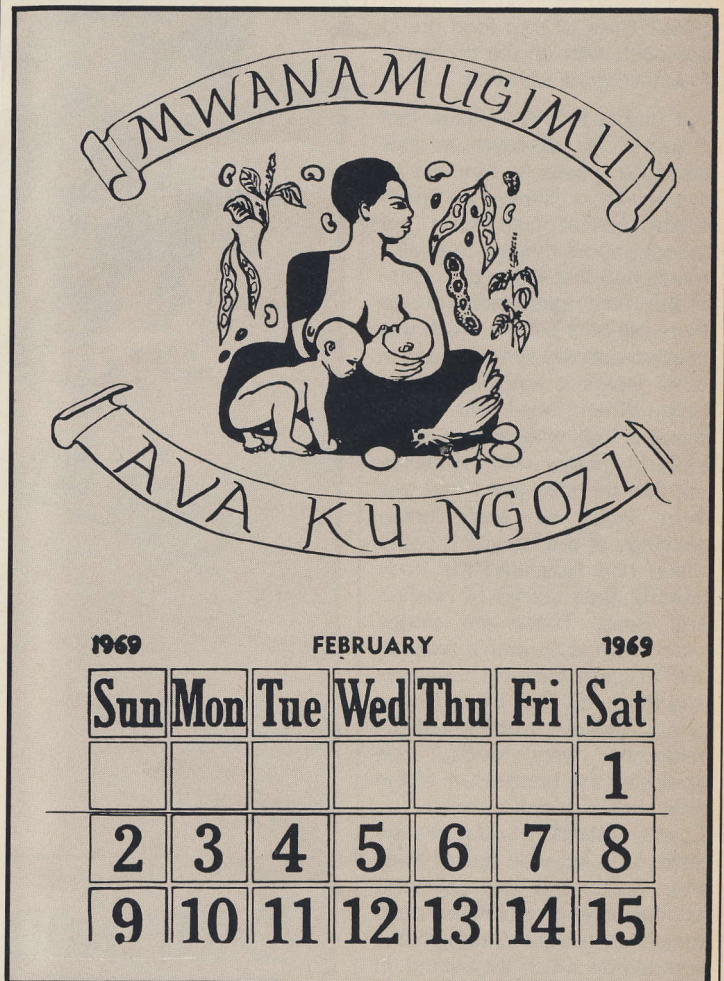
M.A.C. Perhaps this is best illustrated by another important aspect of the use of proverbs that we found in Uganda. Within most rural homes there will be one or several illustrated proverbs on the walls. These would be drawn in a rather decorative fashion with the words in script and usually a symbolic picture in the centre. When we thought about actual production of the teaching aids in a proverbial form. Not surprisingly one of those things we actually did was to make a poster on the basis of the "mwanamugimo ava ku ngozi" proverb. Our artist, drew a mother and a child motif which forms the centre of this and our intention of this was that it would be in a form that would be acceptable on the walls of homes. It would find its place amongst the gallery of the wisdom of people. (Fig 1).

Another aspect of this which personally interests me a great deal is that the existence of a

written proverb on a wall of a rural home is the first step towards literacy of many of the older people of that homestead. The oldest grandmother without necessarily being able to read much at all would recognise each of the proverbs and she would have taken in a sense a first step towards literacy in the discerning of the differences of the proverbs in her home. I think that this approach is one which is paralleled by other work towards literacy. That says, if words that are of the greatest meaning to people are the ones they first see written then they come into reading and writing in the most meaningful fashion. It's direction which is quite unlike the normal one in which a very meaningless vocabulary is part of a formal classroom grammar based teaching, the cat on the mat, variety!!

We took this idea in various steps beyond this one to the use of not just words but of pictures. Again on the walls of most homes we found that framed pictures had pride of place. Very often they were pictures of important family occasions and it was quite evident to us that in Uganda the photograph was a meaningful basis for communication. In our work we found that the before and after photograph of a child with malnutrition formed a very fertile basis for discussion and it was the perception and the reality of this change, in the curative process which gave credibility to the whole teaching. In other words, because the children got better on the food that the mothers themselves had prepared they found it not too difficult to believe that food was important and had a relevance to the health of their children. We used this confirmation for the individual mothers by taking polaroid before and after pictures which were stuck onto a diploma which the individual mothers took back to the homes. This was an attempt to reinforce the learning experience and transform what originally maybe was a position of despair and shame to one of pride. It was also a basis for extension of teaching within the village context because not only will that picture be a reminder to the individual family, but it will be a talking point for anybody else who ever came. Taking the same thinking but extending it we created a poster which incorporated both of these ideas. The idea of the photograph as the communication and the idea of the proverb or a proverbial style as being a way to communicate and we created a poster with a before and after

picture on it as a photograph, but with a small amount of text. On the left hand side we have the mother in despair with the child with frank malnutrition and the simple words above this side are "kitalo nyo", catastrophe or what a shame". "Look at this child, behold him," "laba omwana ono". Then on the other side we have the titling "Kakati laba bwafanan", which means "Now look at the change," and underneath, "kiva mu kulya kitobero", this came from what he ate which was "kitobero".



Now, kitobero, this word in fact was one that I discovered much to my joy, it was within a dialect of Uganda and was already well recognised and it meant a food all mixed together and here I was in fact thrilled to find a traditional word in popular parlance which really summarised the core of our whole teaching. The core of our teaching is really "mix and mash" and here was a word which meant just that, it was in fact traditionally applied to an adult dish so the idea of a child having "ketobero" was in a sense an innovation. It was however a minor change and bore with it the matter-of-factness and the down to earthness of the preparation techniques which were part of our teaching. In other words for a mixed food the "ketobero" to be suitable for a

child, obviously all the components of this would need to be prepared in such a way that the child can eat them. We had to take the skins off the beans for them to be digestible, if there was to be meat, then meat in lumps is no good for the small child so it had to be scraped. We made innovations like the pounding of small fishes into a simple fish meal which would then be incorporated in a child mixture. But this one word and this one concept was central and it was this in a sense that was the core of our nutrition teaching and not the classic three or four food group approach with all the problems that have gone with that.

But further to this I was in fact delighted to discover in this particular poster a function of symbolism. I think that many health educationists have not thought about this much at all. I mentioned that within the centre of the many traditional proverbs there will be a picture which was characteristically symbolic and in other words it embellished the truth. When faced with this I thought, well, what are we going to fill this poster with? I must admit that the idea that I had was from India. I'd seen Indian paintings of the Kangarra Valley which had illustrated the traditions of their stories of Krishna and Rana. These are stories which related to man's relationship to God in the form of Krishna and Rana, his holy bride. In two classic pictures from a series I remember very vividly, one illustrates the breakdown of the relationship and it's called The Lovers Quarrel. Two figures are seen on a veranda facing away from each other and downcast and the only frame of reference to the picture is a line drawing of the veranda on which they stand. In other words the whole picture is blank and the symbolism is apparent that in a situation of despair there is a blankness in the surroundings. The contrast of this is the re-uniting of Krishna with Rana where the couple are now seen re-united, sitting together facing each other under a mango tree and the mango tree is filled with little birds. Bright birds and mangos and there are flowers everywhere and the symbolism of this is obvious that there is a richness in life, when people, in this case are re-united. I attempted to use a very similar idea.

G.S.F. You know you get the same idea from the Dutch painter, Vermeer. He paints a downcast family with a dark

background and few people and then he paints the happy family having a ball and they're dancing, with many people and bright colours and things everywhere.

M.A.C. That's right. I think that this is important in a sense that we have this in our tradition but we

G.S.F. But it's also decorative?

M.A.C. This is the interesting thing. When we started using this one of the things we found by doing this on a litho print in black and white it made it possible for many of the things to be coloured in. It was in the colouring in with chalk and crayons that each of



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have become very literal in latter years and we have tended to be right down onto a literal right down onto a literal representation, from facts, yes facts, a carrot is a carrot, you know, or a picture of a cabbage is a cabbage and I think that in a way we have lost some of this potential. In a way this is what I did with this particular poster. The first side in fact is blank and the second side is surrounded by a very intricate intermeshing of fine drawings of different kinds of foods. (Fig. II)

these posters became individual to the families who took them. If the mother couldn't do it very often there were children of the very same family who would be delighted to do this so that in the very colouring the thing became a part of a home. When we talked to people using a proverb like this, they would not take up many points. They could look at the photograph and talk about the words that related to that photograph and the concepts that came from that. But when I speci-

fically asked about the overall format I was in fact very encouraged that the Indian example proved to be true, certainly in the Ugandan context. The kind of comment we had was, there was nothing on the left hand side because the woman had lost hope and then somebody would say, "Oh, yes, not only had she lost hope, but her eyes were downcast, she cannot see around her, and she said, "isn't that so that when we are in a bad place, we don't actually see." Then other would look at the other side and they'd say, "This is decorative, this is the good side now, and what surrounds it makes it feel better." And then people would begin to look at that and see the actual content and they'd say, "Ah, look, yes," and it became almost a game. In fact some of the food names are included in the picture so the children would begin to make it a game. They would see the names of all kinds of different foods and if they looked carefully they would begin to see those things. So it became like that. But then people also began to make the commentary, "Oh, look, now what's happened? Here eyes are open and suddenly she sees that she is surrounded. In her own homestead she is surrounded by all of these things. And then somebody said isn't it amazing, it's the same garden that surrounded her in the first picture." But she didn't see it and now she has perceived it."

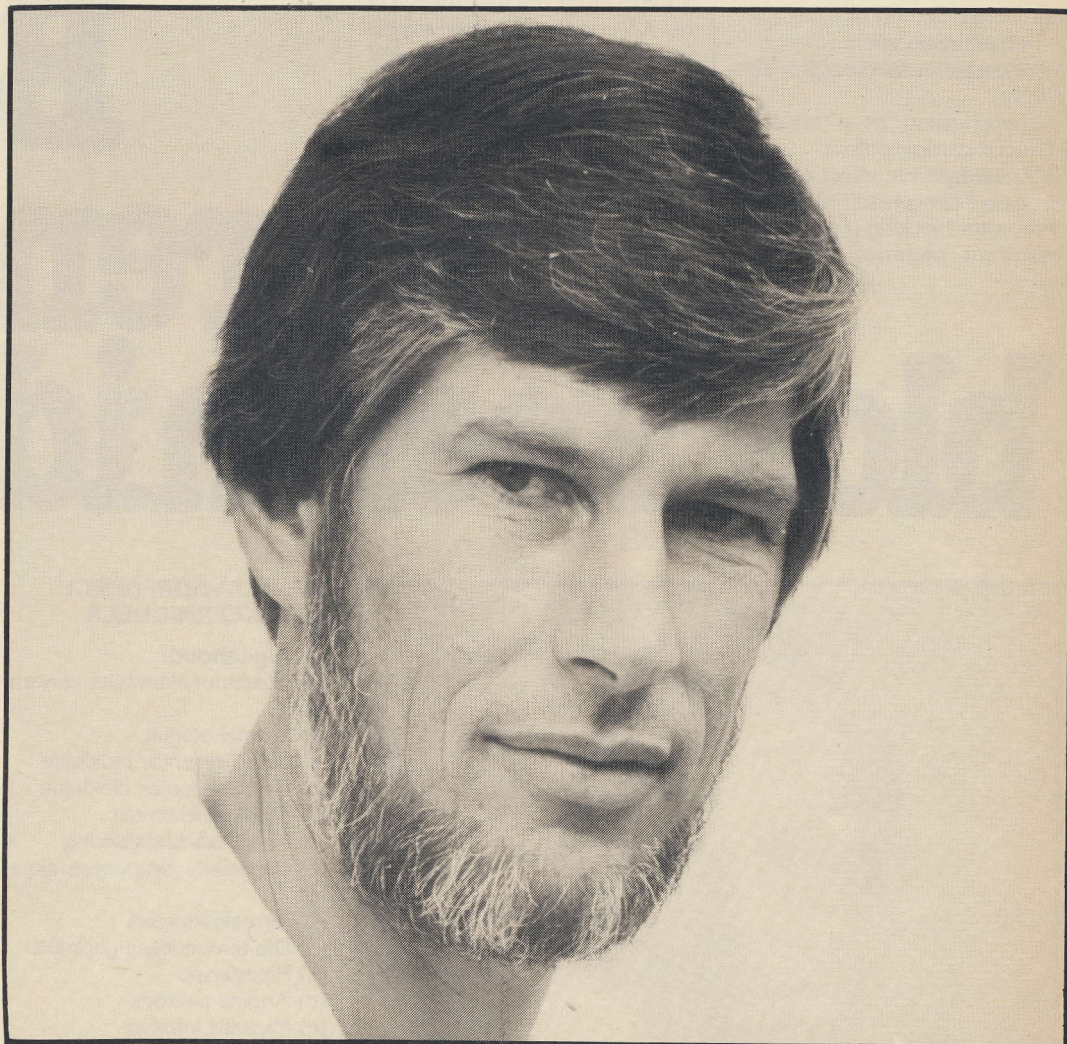
G.S.F. Cheerful!

M.A.C. Now this personally made me very excited with this because to me it was a good example of an open-ended teaching device. I was told many more things about this poster, and its use than I had ever imagined when I put it into practice and I think that this is an example of something which has become a creative part of teaching. It's not just a poster with information which is a kind of propaganda. I personally have a great reservation about the place of these things in health education. There are some places for it but certainly I think that this kind of open-ended teaching which is uncommon in health education, is really the heart of it.

A further development of our ideas from what I have said was into another thing that we found in most homes was calendars. We found these to be very popular and it gave us the ideas for the format of the material we could get into individuals homes. Working out the idea for a calendar then was an extension of what we've talked about. A central

theme for a proverbial form was illustrated in a sequence of twelve pictures. In the first year I did that, the central theme was the homestead and the picture with the words was like this, the words "Amaka ageyagaze kirabo", meant literally the homestead to be proud of. The word "Amaka", in Luganda implies everything in the home as the physical things like the house itself, the kitchen and the garden and all the other things, but also includes the family, so it's a very inclusive word. "Ageyagaza" means not pride in the sense of arrogance, but pride in the sense of feeling good about something. Ah, and then "kirabo", it means the prize,

something that you prize. "Kukolerawamu nokutabagana" means, that's working together and taking care. Thus we have two simple concepts, the homestead to feel proud of, to feel good about is the prize of parents who take care and work together. The individual little pictures then are symbolic of many activities that relate to the homestead and it includes the family and the farm and it includes the quality of the house and all the other environmental components. The sequence then from that is a development of the idea each month in a new picture which then takes the problem along the lines of what we've talked about.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Dr G. S. Fehrsen, Professor and head of the Department of Family Medicine at Medunsa (Medical University of Southern Africa at Garankuwa). After qualifying at UCT in 1972, he served his internship at McCord Zulu Hospital. Later, he worked as Medical Officer at Rietvlei DRC Mission Hospital at Livingstone Hospital, Port Elizabeth; Rietvlei Hospital and Mount Ayliff DRC Mission Hospital. He became Medical Superintendent at Mount Ayliff DRC

Mission Hospital in the Transkei in January 1966 and served there until December 1974. From 1975 until 1976 he worked at the Hans Snyckers Institute and Department of Family Medicine at the University of Pretoria. In September, 1976, he went to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to study epidemiology and medical statistics. He returned in April 1977 and assumed his present position at Medunsa. Prof. Fehrsen is a member of various scientific and other bodies.

SUMMARY

This article explains the precise mechanism of the important group of drugs called beta-adrenergic blocking agents. The therapeutic indications and efficacy of the drugs are described. Sinister side effects are highlighted and suggestions are given for the correct selection of the most appropriate drug for the purpose intended.

1. The antihypertensive effects are probably due to a combination of pharmacological properties:

- an effect on the central regulation of blood pressure
- a blocking action on the adrenergic neuron or
- an antirenin effect
- increase in baroreceptor sensitivity
- hypotension as a result of reduced cardiac output.

2. Antiarrhythmic effect of these drugs is a direct result of the beta-1-receptor blocking property with resultant negative inotropic,

dromotropic and chronotropic influence as well as diminished automaticity. Their membrane stabilising abilities thus have no part in the antiarrhythmic result.

Indications for the use of beta-blockers as antiarrhythmics are:

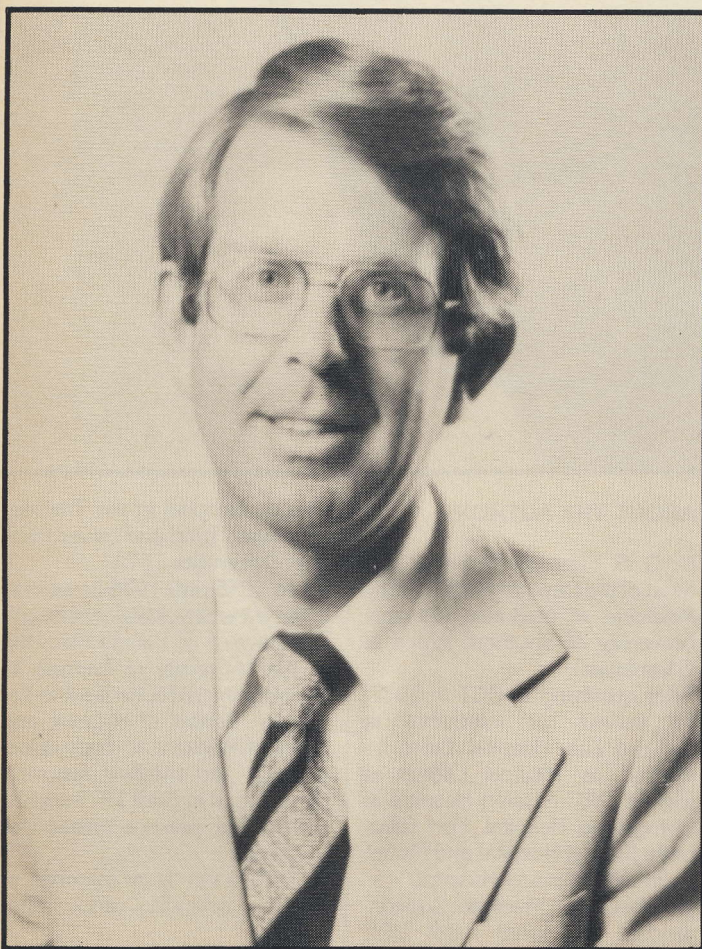
- Supraventricular arrhythmia after infarction
- atrial fibrillation that does not respond to digitalis
- the Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome
- paroxysmal atrial tachycardia (although verapamil is the drug of choice)

The dangers involved in the use of these drugs are disturbance at the A-V-conduction, bradycardia and heartblock. Total A-V dissociation with resultant cardiac arrest may occur.

DR. L. WALTERS

Die Beta-Adrenerge blokkeermiddels

blokkeermiddels



DIE BETA-ADRENERGE BLOKKEERMIDDELS

Lesing-inhoud:

- (1) Struktuur-aktiwiteits verwantskap
- (2) Farmakologie:
 - (a) Beta-1-reseptor blokkade
 - (b) Beta-2-reseptor blokkade
 - (c) Kardioselektiwiteit
 - (d) Membraanstablisering
 - (e) Intrinsieke simpatiese aktiwiteit
 - (f) Farmakokinetika
- (3) Die terapeutiese gebruike:
 - (a) Hipertensie
 - (b) Angina pectoris
 - (c) Miokard infarksie
 - (d) Anti-aritmies
 - (e) Angsneurose, Parkinsonisme, hipertirose e.s.m.
- (4) Die keuse en dosering van 'n beta-blokkeermiddel

(1) STRUKTUUR-AKTIWITEITS VERWANTSKAP:

Die adrenerge reseptore kan verdeel word in alfa-adrenerge reseptore en beta-adrenerge reseptore. Die alfa-adrenerge reseptore veroorsaak, wanneer gestimuleer, depolarisering en sametrekking van alle gladdespier behalwe die dermwand. Stimulering van die beta-adrenerge reseptore veroorsaak hiperpolarisering en ver-

slapping van gladdespier, 'n positiewe inotropie en chronotropie asook glikogenolise en lipolise. Die beta-adrenerge reseptore word verder verdeel in beta-1-reseptore en beta-2-reseptore.⁽¹⁾⁽⁴⁾

Verspreiding van adrenerge reseptore:

ORGAAN	TIPE RESEPTOR
Hart	beta-1
	beta-1
	beta-1
Metaboliese effekte	beta-1
Brongi	beta-2
Uterus	beta-2
Spierbloedvate (arterioli)	beta-2
Vel en slymvlies	alfa
— arterioli	
Dermwand	alfa en beta

Die endogene katesjolamiene nl. noradrenalin, adrenalin en dopamin, asook die geneesmiddels isoproterenol, dobutamin, heksoprenalin, salbutamol, metoksamin en nog andere is almal agoniste by die adrenerge reseptore. Sommige van hierdie verbindings sal beide alfa- en