By Dr John Smith

THE SA ACADEMY OF FAMILY PRACTICE/
PRIMARY CARE's VOCATIONAL TRAINING
SCHEME

At the outset I think it should be stated, as my 'title of
office' implies, that the Academy is acting as a co-
ordinating body for family practice/primary care/
vocational training in this country and, as many of you are
aware, our first Vocational Training Scheme started at
Edendale Hospital at the beginning of the year thanks to
the far-sighted policy of the Kwa Zulu Health Authorities.

Health care has probably changed more in the last thirty
years than in the previous three thousand and therefore I
think it is important to state some principles which are
universally accepted. Without principles one hardly knows
whether one is doing is honest, ethical or
economically beneficial.

The first principle that requires stating is that new
graduates intending to enter family practice/primary care
require vocational training for the same reasons as their
specialist colleagues. It is astounding that this simple truth
has been ignored in this country, consequently it is not
surprising, that we have been galloping headlong towards
'Health Crisis 2000'. I wonder how many tax payers realize
that virtually all medical vocational training funds are
expended on training specialists, yet 90% of their health
care is carried out in the family practice/primary care
setting.

The second principle that requires stating, even if it has
been stated many times before, is that the most
economically beneficial health care system is one based on
an adequate and appropriately trained family
practice/primary care service. For any service to be
effective it must reach a very high percentage of the
population.

The third point that should be mentioned is that it is taken
for granted that the principles of surgery, or for that matter
of any branch of medicine, are the same in the public and
private sectors. Therefore, it is strange that some
academics are claiming that family practice is only
practiced in the private sector and that a different type of
medical care should be practiced in the public sector.
Times change, knowledge and populations increase,
therefore more emphasis has to be given to roles of activity
than to staff categories. The modern family practitioner
has to fill a role in which he or she must manage with the
resources available to meet the needs of a large number of
people by being a leader and co-ordinator of a
comprehensive health care team.

The building which houses the newly established
Department of Family Practice at Edendale Hospital was
donated by Eli Lilly Foundation and the Academy is
deeply grateful for their generous gift.

The first group of vocational trainees started their 'hospital
phase' of training on 1st January in the specialties they
wish to undertake to broaden their knowledge.

In the second year, they will be involved with approved
'family practice' training units in mission hospitals and
health centres.

In future issues we will go into more details of the scheme
and into the life of a trainee.

The Academy is also grateful to Sterling Winthrop for
donating R5 000 towards the Kwa Zulu Vocational
Training Scheme to provide educational equipment,
amongst other things.

A simple truth, ignored in this
country, is that new graduates
entering family practice/
primary care require
vocational training for the
same reasons as their
specialist colleagues.

If you wish to know more about the vocational training
schemes or are interested in undertaking vocational
training write to:

National Co-Ordinating Director (VTS)
SA Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care
Medical House
Central Square
Pinelands
7405

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