

# **AN OVERVIEW OF THE YEARS 1997-2003**

**Marietjie de Villiers, National Chairman 1997-2003.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

As with Basil Jaffe in the previous section I relate from a personal perspective the period 1997-2003

## **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)**

The main business of the Academy since its inception has been CPD, but when the Health Professions Council of SA (HPCSA) in 1999 introduced obligatory CPD for all medical practitioners, it provided opportunities for the Academy to grow. We saw a remarkable increase in attendance at our activities, and were able to provide attractive and relevant programmes. But soon many other CPD providers joined with various incentives such as dinners, weekends away etcetera, incentives which the Academy could and would not compete with.

A remarkable achievement that acknowledged our role in setting and maintaining standards for the profession, was the development of the CPD accreditation portfolio. Julia Blitz-Lindeque took the initiative in this regard, not only convincing the decision-makers that the Academy had to be approved as a CPD Accreditor, but she also devised an operational process to administer our accreditation operations to become one of the foremost accreditors in the country today.

## **CONGRESSES**

Three main conferences were held during 1997 – 2003, apart from the regular yearly mini-congresses organised by the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal regions.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Family Practitioners' Congress in August 1998 took place at Sun City and was themed "The Art of Holistic Care" with Chris de Muelenaere as Convenor. Chris and his team managed to organise a very successful and financially viable congress in a time when the traditional funding support for academic conferences was waning.

The usual 2-yearly conference for the year 2000 was postponed to put all effort into the 16<sup>th</sup> WONCA World Congress in May 2001 in Durban with Garth Brink as Congress Convenor and Bruce

Sparks as Chairman of the Scientific Programme. The theme was “Family Medicine: The Leading Edge”. Hard work was put into this programme over a long period of time and despite many concerns of not attracting participants from afar, the Congress turned out to be a huge success, and our international delegates thoroughly appreciated it. The congress also drew the largest number of local family practitioners ever to a South Africa family practice congress.

The WONCA Council meeting held at Alpine Heath in the Drakensberg preceded the Durban Congress. It was attended by about 120 office bearers: people from all over the world, leaders in family practice in their own countries. The mood at this meeting was very positive and up-beat about the future of family practice globally. The SA Academy of Family Practice/Primary Care received encouraging compliments and praise from many prominent family practice leaders during this meeting. To crown it all Bruce Sparks was elected as the WONCA President-Elect for 2004 – 2007 and was installed as WONCA President at the 2004 WONCA Orlando Congress. The Academy leadership was also instrumental in assisting with the initiation of a WONCA Women in Family Medicine group, which has since become an official Working Party of WONCA, with Marietjie de Villiers currently serving on its executive committee.

On Sunday night, 13 May 2001, the opening ceremony for the 16<sup>th</sup> WONCA World Congress was held in Durban. I will never forget that moment, standing in front of a hall filled with 2400 Family Practitioners from all over the world. It indeed was the greatest event ever in the history of the SA Academy of Family Practice! The congress put the SA Academy firmly on the global family practice agenda, by setting up a highly successful academic congress discussing relevant, pertinent and burning issues for health care in family practice and primary care. Garth and Bruce were awarded Honorary Membership of the Academy in recognition of their massive contributions to the organisation over many years including the organising of the 16<sup>th</sup> WONCA Congress.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Family Practitioners’ Congress was held in August 2003 at Stellenbosch with Shadrick Mazaza as Convenor and Bob Mash as Scientific Chairperson. This congress was the first to be organised in collaboration with FaMEC (all 8 departments of

Family Medicine), and RuDASA (Rural Doctors Association), in an attempt to better co-ordinate the profession and bring all the role players in Family Medicine in the country together. A workshop for the WONCA African Regions was also held during the conference and a number of delegates from Africa attended the congress.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

The SA Family Practice journal went through a difficult time. Decreasing interest in advertising, as well as losses over a period of time and disinterest by the profession threatened the survival of our journal. A number of initiatives were launched to develop and sustain the journal, initially driven by Garth Brink, and supported by Julia Blitz-Lindeque, Mark Ferreira, Perland Publications and Jannie Hugo. After short periods with Roy Jobson and Russell Kirkby the editorship was taken up by Pierre de Villiers. Pierre and team worked hard to build up the journal again. In 2002 a successful merger with the Medpharm publication “Geneeskunde” was launched which contributed significantly to the status and sustainability of the journal. Pierre has continued to develop the journal into a world class publication, now ably supported by Gboyega Ogunbanjo, Douw Greeff and a committed editorial board including esteemed international academics. The Academy continues to spend a large proportion of its funds on the journal and in doing so making a significant contribution to the academic discipline of Family Medicine in South Africa. The monthly Journal has a strong peer-reviewed research section, a CPD section, a Rural Health section, Academy news etc. Indeed, the only one you need to read. “Today’s Doctor” also joined the Journal and provides practice and managed care news and content.

There continued to be a large demand for the SA Family Practice Manual. It needed updating and we embarked on a number of initiatives to further develop the product. It was decided that a focus on skills is crucial as there is nothing available to family practitioners in South Africa. The South Africa Family Practice Skills Manual is currently in its final stages of production in association with FaMEC under the able editorship of Bob Mash.

