

This edition of the Journal is devoted to articles relating to physiotherapy education in the African context, primary health care and rehabilitation. These are all matters of vital importance to our profession and need to be addressed if we want to remain a relevant and viable profession. We need to become actively and conscientiously involved in all facets of health care and we must ensure that our services do contribute to the health of the majority of the citizens of South Africa.

Primary Health Care

Primary health care is the principle behind the restructuring of South Africa's health services, yet it is still seen by some to be second-class care for the poor and those in rural areas. Pat Bowerbank explains the concept of PHC and clarifies some of the fundamental issues. PHC is not only preventive care but is an integrated system of promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitation services. Bowerbank's article offers some guidelines as to how physiotherapists can become more actively involved.

A working committee, convened by Sheena Irwin-Carruthers, has held numerous workshops to establish the role our profession will play in future health services. Position papers have been drafted and sent to Branches and Groups for possible refinement. These papers have also been sent to policy makers in our country, to non-governmental organisations and other health professionals in order that they may become aware of what physiotherapy can and should achieve.

Community Involvement

Community involvement in all aspects of health care is stressed by planners of the new health policies. The SA Medical and Dental Council is considering community-based undergraduate medical training, but has conceded that this will not automatically lead to improved medical services in understaffed areas.

The SASP has recognised the problem of poorly serviced rural and peri-urban areas and has urged for improved conditions of service and career opportunities in order to attract more physiotherapists to these areas. P Wallner and A Stewart discuss reasons for the introduction of a community component in the undergraduate physiotherapy programme at the University of the Witwatersrand. This has given students greater insight into the needs of various communities and the problems that need to be addressed. However, greater incentives need to be created to draw physiotherapists to these areas and keep them there.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation has been the Cinderella aspect of health care in both the public and private sectors. Because of the long term care needed, rehabilitation is seen as time consuming and not cost-effective. An interesting aspect of rehabilitation, which is affordable, effective and appropriate is presented by Helen Myezwa. This is the concept of the rehabilitation village which was started in Zimbabwe in 1986. This type of rehabilitation depends on the services of less qualified health personnel to undertake the training of care-givers, and

physiotherapists provide intermittent consultative and administrative skills.

Recently the African Rehabilitation Institute (ARI) designed a physiotherapy programme for implementation in African countries. Although South Africa was not involved in the workshops, the Advisory Committee of the Professional Board for Physiotherapy has taken cognisance of this informative document. Suggestions have been made to implement certain aspects of the document into the South African physiotherapy curricula. In the article by Dele Amosun, a comparison is made between the ARI proposal and the training programmes in Nigeria.

Ethics Committee

A number of nominations for the chairpersons of the Ethics Committee have been received. Members of the SASP are requested to elect four members from the list provided, to serve on the new committee of the SASP. Matters to be addressed by this peer review committee are the maintenance of standards of practice and quality assurance as well as the resolution of ethical problems which may arise in physiotherapy practice in hospitals, special schools and private practice.

WCPT-Africa

A brief report of the successful General Meeting and Congress of WCPT-Africa is given. Hopefully South African physiotherapists will not only participate in next year's WCPT congress in Washington, but will also contribute in greater numbers to the next African Congress in 1996.