

REACH OUT!

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The Department of Physiotherapy at the University of Pretoria will host a 3-day symposium from 3 to 5 October 1990 (to coincide with the 40th anniversary of Physiotherapy education in Pretoria).

The theme of the symposium will be REACH OUT! Prof Joan Cole, associate professor in Physiotherapy at the University of Curtin, Australia, will be the guest lecturer. As the National President of the Australian Physiotherapy Association, Prof Cole has played a major role in the professional development of Physiotherapy in Australia.

In order to ensure that physiotherapy students learn management and problem solving skills that are relevant and current, it is necessary that the objectives of education be regularly reviewed.

Furthermore, it is necessary for physiotherapists to assess their role not only in meeting the changing and developing health care needs of the Republic of South Africa, but also in facing the unfolding challenges.

According to the 1988 statistics only 27% of physiotherapists were employed in the public sector, whereas 73% were practising in the private sector.

That the population is expected to grow to 50 million in a decade and 80 million by the year 2020, is no new fact.

If the number of vacant posts in the public sector (40-50%), as well as the increasing call for physiotherapy services in the less developed areas are taken into account, it is obvious that physiotherapists do not nearly fulfill this need.

In his address to the Medical Faculty of the University of Pretoria (August 1988) Dr C F Slabbert, Director-General of the Department of National Health and Population Development, emphasized the following:

- Funds for health care will not be increased much in the future and funds will be channelled towards primary rather than secondary or tertiary health care.
- The process of privatization will probably gain momentum.
- A completely new approach to health care will have to be established. This approach must be less complex, yet

more cost effective, whilst still satisfying the needs of the entire population.

From the abovementioned the following facts relevant to physiotherapists emerge:

- A physiotherapy service must be rendered to the growing and changing population. The population growth demonstrates two divergent tendencies, namely a large percentage of the population either below the age of 14 years or above 60 years.
- Geographic distribution, socio-economic and age stratification, level of education, specific needs of the various population groups, urbanization, etc. are factors which influence epidemiology.

Do the physiotherapy services rendered in the public and private sectors satisfy the community's need for preventive, curative and rehabilitative services?

How should we plan and adapt our approach in order to remain essential members of the health care team?

- At present a physiotherapist may treat patients without referral but still in close co-operation with a medical practitioner. This places the responsibility for providing a more comprehensive primary health care service on the physiotherapist.

Are we ready for it...and can we manage it?

- Rehabilitation is one of the most important aspects of physiotherapy, yet apparently we concentrate on curative services to the detriment of rehabilitation...how can the deficiency in rehabilitative services be addressed?

More physiotherapists should be participating in policy and decision making...it is time for us to contribute to the future planning of physiotherapy services by the Department of National Health and Population Development.

To meet these challenges, the education of students must keep in step with the changing requirements of the profession.

All our colleagues, especially the 73% in the private sector, are invited to take part in the discussions. Ideas for papers, work papers and discussions for the symposium can be submitted to or discussed with Miss Carina Eksteen before the end of February 1990. (Sub-Department of Physiotherapy, P O Box 667, Pretoria 0001. Telephone (012) 213211 x 2023, 2018)♣

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