

NEW HORIZONS FOR PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

Two workshops, on Management and Marketing Physiotherapy respectively, conducted by Professors Andre and Sandra van der Merwe, have sparked the imagination and enthusiasm of a small group of physiotherapists in this country. This select group were introduced to management principles and guided to apply these to various facets of physiotherapy by a series of workshops and lectures over a period of three days in April 1980. A weary but enlightened group spread back to their respective corners to put into practice what they had learned.

In March this year the same group met for two days to learn how to market Physiotherapy. Once more small and large group workshops and discussions came to grips with new concepts, exchanged knowledge and ideas, and were fired with enthusiasm to take action.

This spilled over into the National Council Meeting where a resolution was passed to establish an Action Committee (to be merged with the Activations Committee) which is to have wide ranging national representation in the form of small local committees in order to implement the decisions arrived at after the workshop on Marketing. These committees are to assess the role physiotherapy should play in fulfilling future community health needs (an area of possible development and need identified by the workshop participants); to formulate a plan of action whereby qualified physiotherapists and those in training could be equipped to fulfil these needs; to devise means of educating the general public as to the role of physiotherapy especially in prophylaxis and finally to raise funds to

appoint a Public Relations Officer to further all the above.

The pre-Council Congress, with the theme "Keeping in Touch", dealt with aspects of communication, emphasising health care in a multi-ethnic, multilingual society; highlighting new and unusual aspects where physiotherapists were already involved; introducing subjects of future interest and need such as ergonomics; and finally challenging the ranks to conduct research into the rationale, effects, efficiency and logic of physiotherapy techniques further added grist to the mill.

Some of the articles in this and the previous issue have pointed to areas of health care where physiotherapists could be involved in changing and new roles, counselling patients and their families, playing a vital role in multidisciplinary teams managing childhood diseases in a positive and preventive approach.

It would be most enlightening to survey the ripple effect of all this energy input into the pond of physiotherapy. How many new ventures have been tackled in the different areas? How many old ventures have had an infusion of new ideas and approaches? And how many have turned old ventures into new adventures?

Who said physiotherapy had reached maturity and decline? A whole group of enthusiastic innovators have been set free and by this time all newcomers to the profession should be impatient to explore the many possibilities and many a senior should have taken heart and peeped at the shining new horizons.

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