

EDITORIAL

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Our Two Million Helping Hands

With the recent publication of the Xhosa edition of *You and Your Baby (Wena Nosana Lwakho)*, the Medical Association of South Africa has passed the two-million mark in its distribution of free health guidance booklets to the public.

As these booklets are published and distributed to further the knowledge of health matters and to serve as an aid to health problems, it means that the Association has extended a helping hand to more than two million 'patients' without rendering an account. These include literally thousands from neighbouring territories, mainly from Lesotho and Malawi.

This is an achievement of which the Association can be justly proud, especially if it is borne in mind that since the formation of the Lay Publications Department of the *Journal* 2½ years ago, the distribution tempo has now been stepped up to the tune of half a million copies per year. (*You and Your Baby* booklets published before 1972 make up the balance of the 2 million booklets referred to.) Present indications are that with the inevitable expansion of Lay Publications an even greater volume and increasing variety of booklets will be produced in future.

The continued demand for booklets, as well as the unsolicited letters of appreciation received, gives a clear indication of the existing need for guidance. A single extract from a letter received from an unmarried Black mother will suffice to prove the point:

'I have thoroughly read this book. As an unmarried girl it has helped me a lot. I did not know about keeping myself and my baby during pregnancy and after delivery, and also about the food

that I must eat during pregnancy. What is important is that I have read about keeping my baby healthy, giving the correct food he must have and about the observations when being pregnant. We thank the doctors, matrons, sisters, etc., and those who have decided to show us the light of health, and to our babies.'

As members of the medical profession, 'showing the light of health' to others is to us not a praiseworthy deed of charity, but an accepted responsibility and duty.

For this very reason the Department of Lay Publications was formed within the framework of the Medical Association. One can argue about the effectiveness of the written word as a medium of instruction and philosophise about ideal methods that should be employed while nothing is being done.

Imperfect as it may be, we are getting a message across with our lay publications. This is not an undertaking by an isolated group or department on its own, but a function that is being fulfilled in the name of the Medical Association of South Africa. This task can only be effectively carried out and expanded with active support on all levels within the Association, e.g. on individual, branch and group levels, as well as by increasing co-operation with allied organisations active in the field of health education.

On the individual level, members can assist by firstly requesting the booklets, then by making them freely available, and by informing us of a change of address once booklets have been requested. (Too many booklets are lost or have to

be disposed of because of wrong addresses.) Branches can strengthen our hand by mentioning and discussing booklets at meetings and by including references to these booklets in their newsletters.

The various groups within the Association are fully aware of the specific health guidance problems in their particular field. The ideal situation would be to receive proposals, advice and guidance from them on what should be published. (In this respect we are grateful to groups like the Dermatological Society and the Orthopaedic Association for their co-operation.)

Close ties have already been established with a large number of outside organisations to improve the coverage and distribution of booklets. An important milestone has been reached with the co-operation of the Dental Association of South Africa in the preparation of a booklet of tooth care, which will be published in August to coincide with the Dental Health week.

However important and essential liaison with other organisations may be, the further success of our contribution in the field of health education will depend largely upon the support and participation of members of the Medical Association.

Gelde Toe en Nou

Met die afstudering van die 50ste groep mediese studente aan die Universiteit van die Witwatersrand, wil ons die Fakulteit en die personeel van harte gelukwens. Dit is 'n lang skof en Wits studente het reeds hul plek in die geneeskunde volgestaan, sowel in ons eie land as oral in die wêreld. Ons het toe maar in ons mediese tydskrif van 50 jaar gelede gaan snuffel, of ons nie daar 'n boodskappie vir die huidige finale-jaar studente kon vind nie. (Destyds was dit die *South African Medical Record*.) In die uitgawe van 28 Junie 1924 is daar 'n interessante kennisgewing insake gelde wat gevra mag word.

Die Oranje-Vrystaat- en Basutolandtak van die Britse Mediese Vereniging het aan lede kennis gegee dat hulle as minimum tarief £2-2-0 vir 'n binne-aarse inspuiting mag vra. Hierdie aankondiging wil ons gebruik om aan ons nuwe kollegas van aanstaande jaar te sê: 'Oppas dat julle nie weens te hoë gelde 'n klag van wanpraktyk op jul halse haal nie.' Twee ghienies sou nagenoeg R3-20 wees, hoewel dit onwetenskaplik is om 'n geldstelsel om te skakel as die wisselkoers destyds hoegenaamd nie bestaan het nie. Nogtans kan so 'n benaderde bedrag darem gekonstateer word. Die standaardtarief van 1971 gee aan die hand dat omtrent hierdie bedrag verhaal mag word as daar 'n binne-aarse inspuiting gegee word, mits daar nie ook vir die konsultasie

gelde gevra word nie. Herhaal-inspuitings kan teen 50% van die konsultasiegelde gereken word.

As ons argumentshalwe aanvaar dat die waarde van geld nagenoeg 10 keer hoër was in 1924 as in 1974 (en dit is 'n konserwatiewe skatting), behoort 'n herhaal-binne-aarse inspuiting vandag meer as R30-00 te kos. Toekomstige kollegas, as julle sulke bedrae gaan vra, sal julle baie gou met die Geneeskundige Raad slaags raak. Iewers is daar 'n skroef los. Of ons dokters van weleer het woekerwinste getoon, of vandag se geneeshere word skamelik te min betaal. Ons wil liefs nie hier uitspraak lewer nie.

Dit is goed om te weet dat die afstuderende mediese studente aan Wits hulle nie aan wandade soos te hoë gelde sal skuldig maak nie, danksy die goeie etiese inslag wat hul *Alma Mater* hulle gedurende die afgelope 6 jaar gegee het. Maar dit is tegelyk 'n onrusbarende gedagte dat die Mediese Vereniging na 50 jaar steeds 'n geldestryd moet voer, en 'n ietsie verder in dieselfde rubriek in destyds se tydskrif staan die volgende: 'With politics as such, we have no concern, but we cannot refrain from anxiously awaiting the gazetting of the new Ministry and discovering whether Mr Boydell is to be the Minister of Public Health.'

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?