

VAN DIE REDAKSIE

EDITORIAL

Die Dokter se Vrou Moet Anders Wees

Trou is nie perdekoop nie, dokter-trou is dobbel. Meisie, dink eers goed en as jy besluit het, moenie: dink eers weer.

Die man wat wil dokter word, sy studie, werk en werkswyse, sy huis en manier van leef, sy status, sy alles is anders as dié van ander mense. Soms soveel so dat dit nie 'n grap is nie. Soos in die pastorie—sonder 'n vrou 'n halwe man; maar met 'n befoeterde vrou net 'n dop van 'n man.

Onthou jy trou nie die man wat jy *liefhet* nie, maar met 'n persoon wat 'n besondere werk onder eienaardige omstandighede moet doen; met spesiale mense se kind; die produk van 'n paar dekades vanuit 'n buitengewone agtergrond; met 'n idealis wat daagliks en selfs totale ontnugtering mag beleef; met 'n besliste weet-alles wat om hulp sal soek; met iemand wat heeldag raad moet gee en self nie weet nie; iemand wat meer en te veel male oorvermoede geïrriteerdheid sal wil ruil vir liefde. Jy trou 'n man wat sal smEEK sonder om te vra, wat mag breek voor hy huil.

Sy werk is op verskeie en wisselende plekke, op alle en enige tye, met te veel pasiënte in beperkte tyd; sy tempo te snel; en druk, altyd druk en verantwoordelik, en gebonde aan 'n telefoon wat dag en nag inskakel, wat roep, wat eis, beledig, stry, sloerend tjommel; maar waarsonder, soos na die verlies van 'n sintuig.

Gesonde, gelukkige en opgewekte mense benodig selde 'n dokter, wel swaarmoediges, frustreerdes, verslaafdes, neurote en ipekonders; en mense met pyn, smart en lyding; en almal kla en kla, en kla. Kla gedurig en saans en snags, onverwags en enige tyd, maar eintlik wanneer dit die klaer pas—stap net

in, is toevallig nou hier, is mos 'n dokter—sy eie baas en almal se klaas.

Sy woning is van die beste in 'n gesogde woonbuurt met meeste van die erkende statussimbole. Maar sonder enige privaatheid, met 'n ondersoekbank en nog telefone. En as die dokter nie tuis is nie moet vroujie locum doen, telefoniste wees en raad gee, en as Pa homself onder kwarantyn plaas, moet sy vele wit leuntjies oortuigend kan vertel. Etenstye is totaal onvoorspelbaar en onderbroke veral deur die telefoon.

Hy is 'n twyfelagtige risiko as vader, omdat hy selde tuis is ken hy sy kinders sleg, bekommer hom meer oor sy pasiënte, wil liever slaap as speel, of in stilte 'n drankie geniet. Te min tyd om hulle verkouetjies aandag te skenk en hulle of vroujie se skeel-hoofpyn met medisyne-monsters te troos.

So 'n man het 'n vrou met sekere vaardighede nodig; sy moet vakkundig wees, 'n telefoniste en uithelp-ontvangsdame, boekhoudster; sy moet sosiaal doenig en leidend wees, ook 'n goeie kok en aantreklik wees. Sy moet ook 'n paar ander vermoëns hê—biegmoeder kan speel, die held se glorie weerkaats, die leed en kommer wat hy met die lydende deel versag, frustrasie en hulpeloosheid sublimeer, sy impotensie verstaan en sy hanerigheid verdra.

Vroumens, en as jy dit alles weet en al kwalifiseer jy ook hoe sleg, maar jy is werklik lief vir hom — trou hom, moeder hom, roskam hom en bemin hom, en doen dit gou en met toewyding want hy het jou bitter nodig en dit vir 'n korter as gemiddelde lewensduur.

From the Cave to the Metropolis

Population increase, energy shortage and pollution—these three problems, largely of his own making, have beset man from his earliest development, when he took his first faltering steps towards community living and later complex civilisation. The increase in the number of people who had to be provided for in every community placed a burden on the head of the family, and in more sophisticated circumstances, on the leader of the particular group. The concept has now advanced to the frightening point of a population explosion, and it is, and always has been, a very serious problem. In arid areas a primitive community simply cannot afford to allow uncontrolled increase in its numbers, and various seemingly callous or even cruel methods are used in order to keep numbers within supportable limits.

We are inclined to regard our population explosion nightmare as a new concept. It is not. It has always been present, for the small, primitive tribe that cannot feed its members due to local overpopulation, is facing no less a serious crisis than the country that has to import food to stave off a national famine. Figures about the doubling and trebling of the world population look impressive and therefore excite the public's imagination. But ten Bushmen in a vast desert area experience an equal, if not greater, challenge to find subsistence.

There is an energy crisis upon us and everyone is painfully aware of the seriousness of the situation, for we are daily reminded of it when we have to hold back our fast cars to the permissible 80 km per hour. But this is also an age-old problem. The cave-dwellers had to move from one primitive accommodation to the next as their fuel ran short, and every traveller in undeveloped countries or areas has seen the desolation and devastation that surrounds a kraal where the only source of energy is wood and dung, and the knowledge of flora conservation is lacking. Whether it is high-octane petrol that is in short supply or hardwood for a fire, the results are equally serious in each community,

according to its level of development. The cave-dweller or kraal denizen goes hungry and the large industries stop producing.

With this millenia-old experience of supply and demand as far as fuel is concerned, it is really surprising that we have not given more rational and intensive attention to the inevitable end-result of an ever-increasing number of motorised vehicles and other escalating demands for energy from oil. The supply cannot be limitless and even though the present crisis may be politically inspired, the eventual scarcity will be absolute and we will have to be ready to meet it with a sensible alternative. In days gone by, one tribe in all probability also imposed sanctions against its neighbours when supplies started running low, until total shortage transcended the barriers of tribal rivalry.

The third problem is pollution, and in spite of our new-found knowledge about lung disease, the damage to nylon stockings and the aesthetics of a clean environment, this is also no new concept. The cave-dweller was painfully (or tearfully) aware of the need to make his fire downwind from his living quarters, and as soon as his development had reached the level of an intelligent interest in his surroundings, he became conscious of the need for cleanliness and started tidying his hearth and its immediate vicinity. He had become alerted to the dangers and irritations of pollution. We today indulge, in spite of our sophistication and aversion to dirt, to a far larger extent in messing up the world. The fact that we manage to keep our body odours under control, while with the aid of advanced technology we spew garbage in every direction, puts us in no different category than Cro-Magnon man, who befouled his person and his cave.

Population increase, energy demand and pollution—man's three ever-present headaches, have not changed much over the years, and it is unlikely that we will ever find satisfactory answers to these problems.

News Media : We Beg of You

A little while ago we asked medical colleagues to be more understanding of the duties and function of the news media and requested them to be more co-operative in enlightening the public. Now we wish to implore all disseminators of current tidings to have a serious rethink as to their motives when they publish certain proceedings and the concurrent circumstances. Sometimes much damage is done to both our profession and the people involved; and the image of such news media not improved.

We are cognisant of the fact that newspapers publish what pleases the majority of their readers, but, as happened when the managing director of a large and influential newspaper group castigated an editor and was quibblingly reminded 'We only publish what our readers want', he replied 'What a reflection on our public!' One can imagine quite a few features that could whet readers' appetites, but because of an existing code of ethics contentious albeit potentially satiating material is not permitted in print. By the same token some of the matter we read today could be gone without.

While admitting that the average reader seeks 'cake and tears', and not forgetting the atrabilious and the splenic, some items really border on that contentious division separating that which the public wants from what they should be permitted. Remembering instances of suicide following court cases precipitated by the Immorality Act, and judging the whiteness of the linen exposed by reports on certain divorce cases, and nauseating detail published in cases of rape and suchlike, one cannot but feel that these items of news are not really kosher or in any acceptable taste. Nor do revealing photos of a *Victrix Ludorum*, or the scene of a particularly sordid crime of passion improve the standing of a paper. When certain reports cogently remind readers of their patriotic duty or the plight of others it is good; if only the sordid craving of a few is satisfied, it can be regarded as a duty to provide for their affliction with prayers rather than to permit sublimation at such a low level.

Most medical people can, with a feeling of hurt, recall instances where indiscriminate reporting ex-

posed a patient to unnecessary prying or misplaced sympathy just to satisfy the whims of a sensation writer. Admitting that, as is true of all professions, we also have self-glorifying sensation-seekers, does not detract from the fact that most doctors are extremely sensitive and even shy, preferably sidestepping publicity, self-advertisement and exposure of patients to prying thrill-hunters. Admittedly, high winds blow on high places, but this should not reach an intensity tantamount to persecution, as it often does.

Recently another heart was transplanted, and once again all who could jumped on the bandwagon and routed in the seepage to the embarrassment of all, including patient, family and doctors. In medicine, at this level, doctors are dealing with nerve-racking problems taxing their knowledge and their skills, and are exposed to long periods of vigilance and worry. At times like this there is a lot of soul-searching, and periods of mental anguish — should the procedure have been done; was every minor detail attended to; will the patient survive, live longer than he would have? Under these circumstances any human being is hypersensitive and vulnerably defenceless. No wonder that if now subjected to unnecessary fringe-embellishment disruptive confrontation may result. The public, and the Press, must realise that as much as it is not done to make a noise in church, or behave licentiously during a crisis, a hospital-doctor-family setup around the bed of a desperately ill patient is both extremely critical and even sacred.

We implore the Press, fully realising that worthwhile news must be printed, to be even over-reserved when they deal with medical matters, and to report informatively and factually. Then they may find doctors more co-operative and understanding of the functions of news media.

The *Journal* now, as always, enjoys such a pleasant relationship with the news media that we can unashamedly and sincerely beg this further consideration.