

THE DURBAN MEDICAL SCHOOL

I. GORDON, M.B., CH.B., F.R.S.S.AF.

Professor of Pathology and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Natal

The University of Natal, through its Faculty of Medicine, provides a 7-year course of training for undergraduate students for the primary qualification of M.B., Ch.B. Provision is also made for M.Med. degrees for graduates.

Since its inception in 1951, the institution at which the students are trained has been known as the Durban Medical School.

HISTORY

In 1922, the late Dr. J. B. McCord and Dr. Alan B. Taylor (at present a member of the Board of the Faculty of Medicine) started a private school in Durban for the training of African

men as medical practitioners. At that time, the authorities responsible for the registration of medical practitioners were not prepared to recognize a qualification inferior to that which was ordinarily required by medical practitioners for registration in the Union of South Africa, and Dr. McCord and Dr. Taylor were obliged to abandon their efforts.

In 1928, the late Prof. J. W. Bews (who became the first Principal of the Natal University College) included the establishment of a Medical School in a programme of University development in Natal. In the same year, the "Loram" Committee on the Training of Natives in Medicine and Public Health" recommended the establishment in

Johannesburg of a medical school for Natives, segregated from the existing medical school, but under its control.

In 1938, a Government committee appointed to investigate and report on medical training in South Africa concluded 'that the establishment of a separate medical school for non-Europeans in the future be envisaged; for this purpose we think Durban would be the most suitable centre'. The Secretary of this Committee was Dr. E. G. Malherbe, who in 1945 became the Principal of the Natal University College (later the University of Natal).

In January 1944, a meeting was held at the home of Dr. G. G. Campbell (at present Chairman of the Council of the University of Natal), and a small committee was appointed to ensure that Durban should not be overlooked as a centre for medical training. A series of public meetings was convened during 1944 and 1945, in support of the establishment of a medical school in Durban. Towards the end of 1944, the National Health Services Commission, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Henry Gluckman (later Minister of Health in the United Party Government of General Smuts), after considering the claims of Johannesburg as against those of Durban, came to the conclusion that 'the balance of evidence was in favour of Durban as a site of a medical school primarily for non-Europeans, but also for those whose object is to serve non-Europeans'.

A series of representations were made to the Government and, in 1947, General Smuts on behalf of his Cabinet approved, in principle, the establishment of a medical school in Durban under the aegis of the University of Natal.

Early in 1948, a Medical School Committee, which had been established in Natal, met General Smuts in order to enlist his support in expediting the implementation of his Government's decision. He undertook to request Mr. Hofmeyr, the responsible Minister at the time, to make the necessary provisions in such a manner that the medical school should not prove a financial embarrassment to the Natal University College. Soon afterwards, Mr. Hofmeyr died and in the same year the Nationalist Government came into power.

After lengthy negotiations with the Nationalist Government, the late Dr. A. J. Stals (who was both Minister of Health and Minister of Education) announced in 1949 that the Nationalist Government Cabinet had reaffirmed the approval given in principle for the establishment of a Faculty of Medicine in the newly constituted University of Natal.

In 1950, in conveying the decision of the Government to proceed with the establishment of a medical school in Durban under the control of the University of Natal, the Secretary for Education indicated to the University that the Government had agreed to a special subsidy being made available to the University, provided that no European students were enrolled in the Faculty. The Council of the University accepted this condition in respect of *undergraduate students* with the proviso that, subject to the agreement of the Minister of Education, European students might be admitted to the Faculty of Medicine.

Opening of Faculty

In 1950, an Acting Board of the Faculty of Medicine was created and Dr. Alan B. Taylor was appointed Acting Dean of the Faculty.

The Medical School was opened in 1951 with an enrolment of 35 students in the Preliminary Year of study.

In 1952, Dr. Taylor was succeeded by Prof. G. W. Gale, who relinquished his post as Secretary for Health to become full-time Dean of the Faculty. Professor Gale left the service of the University on 30 April 1955.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE NATAL PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The development of the Faculty of Medicine was made possible through the active participation of the Natal Provincial Administration.

Negotiations with the Natal Provincial Administration were initiated soon after the Treasury approval for the establishment of the Faculty was obtained in 1950. These negotiations have been of a highly complex nature and involved the establishment of King Edward VIII Hospital as the teaching hospital of the Faculty.

After several years of negotiation and before the clinical training of the leading group of students had commenced in 1955, a memorandum of agreement was entered into between the Natal Provincial Administration and the University. In terms of this agreement, the Natal Provincial Administration has made substantial financial contributions towards the maintenance and development of the Medical School.

All full-time members of the joint staff of the Natal Provincial Administration and the University of Natal, receive part of their emoluments from the Natal Provincial Administration for their service responsibilities in the hospital. A system of staffing was developed whereby all the part-time visiting staff members to the hospital became teachers at the University. In this way, largely through the cooperation of the Natal Provincial Administration and the part-time staff (most of whom had previously held visiting staff appointments at the hospital), it became possible to provide an integrated and adequate staffing arrangement which has ensured to the Faculty of Medicine the highest possible standards in clinical training.

In spite of many initial difficulties, a spirit of cooperation and mutual confidence has been developed between the University of Natal and the Natal Provincial Administration, and between the full-time and part-time members of the academic staff.

The academic staff at present serving the University consists of 18 full-time members and 91 part-time and honorary members.

THE DEGREES OF M.B., CH.B.

The 7-year course leading to the degrees of M.B., Ch.B. is open to all matriculated non-European students who have, in addition, passed mathematics at their matriculation examination. The curriculum of training extends over 7 years and the courses are as follows:

Preliminary year: English 1 or Afrikaans 1, History 1, Botany 0, Physics 0, and Chemistry 0.

First year: Chemistry 1, Botany 1, Physics 1, Zoology 1, and Sociology 1.

Second year: Anatomy, Physiology, and Psychology (first part of half course).

Third year: Psychology (second part of half course), Pathology, and Pharmacology.

Fourth, fifth and sixth years: Medicine; Surgery; Obstetrics and Gynaecology; Social, Preventive and Family Medicine; Special subjects.

SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE COURSE OF TRAINING

Reference to the regulations laid down by the South African Medical and Dental Council relating to the 'minimum medical curriculum' shows that students in the University of Natal take in their pre-medical studies (in addition to botany, chemistry, physics and zoology), courses in English (or Afrikaans), history and sociology. In addition, the students are required to take a credit course in psychology during the second and third years. The study of social, preventive and family medicine forms part of the clinical course of training during the 4th — 6th years of the curriculum.

The curriculum structure as outlined shows that in the early years of study disciplines are provided in the humanities and in the sociological sciences, as well as in the physical and biological sciences. This provides an effective background for training in the later years of study when the students are required to undertake clinical studies at the King Edward VIII Hospital as well as in the homes of families in communities served by the Institute of Family and Community Health in Durban.

STUDENTS IN TRAINING

The first group of students qualified in November 1957. A total of 45 graduates (37 male and 8 female) have obtained their M.B., Ch.B. degrees at the University of Natal since November 1957.

The distribution of the students in the various years of study in 1959 was as follows:

Year	Men	Women	Total
Preliminary ..	38	6	44
First	24	5	29
Second	25	8	33
Third	32	1	33
Fourth	14	2	16
Fifth	15	3	18
Sixth	25	5	30
Total	173	30	203

There are African, Indian and Coloured students in the Faculty. By an arrangement entered into between the Ministry of External Affairs and the Governments of the Central African Federation and the Protectorates, a limited number of extra-territorial Africans have been admitted to the Faculty of Medicine. In 1959 there were 15 African students from the Central African Federation, 6 from Basutoland, and 1 from Swaziland in the Faculty.

The Department of Education makes 15 bursary/loans available for each year of study for Africans born in the Union of South Africa. These bursary/loans are available for the entire course of study over 7 years.

In the event of there not being sufficient Africans eligible for bursary/loans in a particular year of study, the Department of Education may authorize a single award to a Coloured student and a single award to an Indian student. The South African students come to the Faculty from all parts of the country and the majority of the students gain admission to the preliminary year of study. The University regulations, however, provide that a student who holds an approved degree of any other recognized University and who has obtained credits in botany, chemistry, physics and zoology, may be permitted to enter direct upon the work of the second year of the curriculum. A number of students holding B.Sc. or B.Sc. (Hygiene) degrees, mainly from the University College of Fort Hare, have been admitted to the second year of study. Apart from the State bursary/loans there are a limited number of private bursary/loans and small bursaries and scholarships.

Selection of Students

Normally there are many more qualified applicants for admission to the Faculty than there are places available.

Research into the problems regarding the selection of students has been in progress for the past 4 years, with particular reference to the prediction of pre-medical and pre-clinical examination results. The Faculty's procedure for the selection of students now includes personal interviews and written tests of intelligence and special abilities.

DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Detailed information relating to the activities of the departments in the Faculty show that great developments have taken place in the Medical School under the aegis of the University of Natal. These developments have occurred not only in teaching but also in the field of research. Grants in support of research have been received from organizations such as the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the National Cancer Association of South Africa, the Schlesinger Organization, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Institutes of Health of the United States, and several other bodies and private individuals.

CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the establishment of a Faculty of Medicine within the University of Natal has been one of the most significant events in medicine in South Africa. Apart from the training of non-White medical practitioners for service in the country, members of the staff of the Faculty have, in a few years, made most valuable contributions to research and to the advancement of medical knowledge.