

NEWS AND VIEWS

The College's Response to the GMC Proposals for Basic Specialist Training

Dr Marshall Marinker, chairman of the College's Education Division Executive, explains the background to this document whose full text appears on p. 400.

IN 1981 the General Medical Council, as a first move in discharging its new responsibility for the continuum of medical education, held a one day conference on this subject in London. In the course of the debates it became clear that there was considerable interest in, and often dissent from, the idea of a middle period of medical education devoted to what Todd called 'general professional training'. A number of contributors to the debate from hospital based disciplines made the observation that vocational training for general practice seemed to embody many of the principles of general professional training which Todd had outlined.

Accordingly, the General Medical Council's Education Committee decided to set up, as its first working party, a group which would look at the concept of general professional training. Their report, surprisingly called *Proposals For Basic Specialist Training*, appeared earlier this year and was circulated to colleges, universities and other interested bodies for comment. Among the pieces of evidence considered by the GMC's working party was a document from a working party of our own College's Education Division Executive. This paper was concerned to look at the whole continuum of medical education from the point of view of general practice. It reaffirmed the College's commitment to general professional training. The gap between the views of our own College and those of the GMC is made painfully clear in their *Proposals For Basic Specialist Training*.

The Education Division Executive was asked to produce a response to the GMC, and a final draft was approved by Council in March this year. Although couched in the form of a reply to the GMC, the College's response embodies established College policy statements, and sets out much of the College's present philosophy of medical education. It touches not only on our commitment to the idea of general professional training, but also on our views of the undergraduate phase and on the future of vocational training.

Our response ends with a challenge to the GMC. If they

Summary of the College's response

The Royal College of General Practitioners:

- i. supports the General Medical Council's attempt to maximize flexibility of choice in hospital and other posts, by junior doctors in the early years of training;
- ii. welcomes the Council's recognition of the unique and important contribution which general practice has to make to pre-specialist training but believes that this extends to the training of all future clinicians;
- iii. regrets that the Council has not made its case on the basis of sound educational principles, but appears to have argued on the basis of present training policies;
- iv. reaffirms its wish for a mandatory period of general professional training, as argued by Todd, and its wish to see this period brought within a framework of registration, as argued by Merrison;
- v. rejects the *Proposals for Basic Specialist Training* on the grounds that they will not achieve the aims of general professional training, and urges the Council to make a renewed effort to create a mandatory phase of general professional training;
- vi. invites the General Medical Council to undertake a review of the continuum of medical education, and affirms its eagerness to take part.

take it up, this College will once again show itself committed to take part in a serious review of the whole of medical education. But if the GMC feels unable to rise to the challenge, our own College will have to consider what initiatives it can take, and with whom it can form partnerships, in order to achieve the reforms for which it argues.

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