



debate around same-sex relationships. Then too, the central issue in society's protection of marriage has always been the provision of a stable environment for the nurturing of children. The evidence is overwhelming that a stable, loving home established by a child's birth parents is the best preparation for children to grow up as mature, stable adults who contribute optimally to their society. Yet the profession has said very little about this reality in our discussions with government or any others with regard to our priorities in nation building.

Can it be that we are intimidated into being politically correct and silent on these issues at a time when our people are losing centrally important visions that previous generations took for granted? It is salutary to note that the Graeco-Roman Empire, about which you wrote in your editorial,<sup>1</sup> unravelled when its moral fibre disintegrated.

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1. Van Niekerk JP. Sexuality and SAMA. *S Afr Med J* 2005; 95: 131.

## Doctors disunited

**To the Editor:** I retired from medical politics in approximately 1995. Recently I was given the honour of being appointed President of the Gauteng Branch of SAMA. My interest in the Medical Association and the general field of medical politics was then reactivated.

I recently attended the medical congress at Caesar's and must congratulate the organisation on a well-prepared and organised congress.

Many topics were covered; to my mind the best presentation was by Dr Mamphele Ramphele. She could easily be my president.

Another brilliant presentation was by Roelf Meyer – one can hardly believe that he belongs to the hierarchy of the old National Party. He mentioned that in fact the deliberations on transformation and formation of the new constitution with Cyril Ramaphosa took place in that very hall.

The presentation by Advocate Elsabe Klinck was also very revealing; what a brilliant person SAMA lost to the pharmaceutical branch.

On reflection I came to the following conclusions, which I have held for many years. Firstly, there would be no nursing homes or hospitals without doctors. Secondly, there would be no medical aid schemes without doctors. Thirdly, there would not be patients if there were no doctors.

According to these conclusions doctors should constitute one of the most powerful bodies in the land. Yet we seem to be the weakest, or in fact we are one of the weakest bodies. Why? Because we are such a disunited group.

With this strength we should be governing our own destiny. Instead we are sat upon and bullied by the medical aid schemes, the Department of Health, the Health Professions Council and also by patients.

If one wants to summarise things, one could say that doctors are not wanted but only needed.

I would like to know what the answer is. How can we, as a profession, get together and unite as a single body, much as COSATU has done?

Surely SAMA should be able to take on this problem and make it its priority for the next year so that at next year's conference they can tell us what progress has been made. We might even learn some lessons from COSATU.

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## HPCSA – the sound of silence

**To the Editor:** The question of my continuing medical education was raised by an overseas hospital to which I had applied for a locum post. My 71-point portfolio for 2002 had been sent to the Manager for Continuing Professional Development of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) in March 2003. On 24 January 2004 I asked the CPD manager for some sort of certification of competence for use with locum applications. I repeated the request on the 23 March 2004 when mailing my points for 2003.

Having had no reply to two requests, I wrote to him again on 21 May 2004.

*Fourteen months later*, I still await the courtesy of a response.

On assuming the office of HPCSA President, one of Professor Padayachee's first public statements was to boast that Council would vigorously pursue physicians guilty of malpractice.

Why does the Council treat its other members with such gross contempt?

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*A request for a response to this letter by the HPCSA was also met by silence. (Ed.)*