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takingaction Divisions of General Practice Network Forum 2004



Organised General Practice, or Organised Primary Care?

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Past President NZMA,

Past Chairman NZGPA,

Past Deputy Chairman NZMA.

ProCARE

NZ GPs and the Government

- ▶ NZ GPs have had a long and generally successful history of defending their precious right to independence.
- ▶ In the late 1930s and the early 1940s, at which time 25% of the medical workforce was overseas on military service, the NZMA successfully ensured the maintenance of the right to charge a fee commensurate with the service provided, when the Social Security Act (1943) was enacted.

NZ GPs and the Government

- ▶ In 1985, the NZMA succumbed to government pressure, so as individuals, Drs Mike Cooper, David De Lacey and Tom Marshall sought a Judicial Review of the government's action and succeeded in having a scheme to control GPs' fees thrown out.
- ▶ In 1988, the Minister of Health, the current Prime Minister, Helen Clark, tried again. This time the NZMA and a small group of individuals, including Tom Marshall sued the government, again. This time, unsuccessfully.

NZ GPs and the Government

- ▶ In 1990, aided by active campaigning by the NZMA , the government was defeated and the contract that sought to control GPs' fees was abandoned by the incoming government.

Principles to Live By

- ▶ GPs had fired their best shots and used most of their powder and some sort of accommodation with government seemed inevitable. With this in mind, the GP members of the NZMA developed five principles for dealing with government:
 1. GPs' services should be accessible to all NZ'ers.
 2. All NZers should have the right to choose their own GP.
 3. The quality of NZ general practice should be maintained.
 4. The independence of NZ GPs should be maintained.
 5. The right to charge a fee, commensurate with the service provided should be maintained.

Legislative Opportunity

- ▶ Consultation and negotiation leading to the Health & Disability Services Act 1993.
- ▶ Provision for contracting to provide services.
- ▶ Conflict in the NZMA, GPs favouring the legislation, specialists opposing.
- ▶ Opportunity for GPs to attain influence, previously dominated by specialists.

Emotive Opposition Easy to Summon

- ▶ Conflict erupted into the GP world.
- ▶ GP Action Group formed.
- ▶ GP Action Group challenges the NZGPA.
- ▶ Tom Marshall calls for election.
- ▶ GP Action Group “cocks up”.
- ▶ Tom Marshall re-elected.
- ▶ IPAs develop.

IPAs Embraced by Leading and Influential GPs

- ▶ IPAs formed, including Pegasus, ProCare and Rotorua GP Group.
- ▶ Many GPs sceptical.
- ▶ Many join, to have a “bob each way” .
- ▶ Early success with GPs pleased to have their say, develop their own guidelines for practice, with supportive specialist assistance.

Just Because You Are Paranoid, Doesn't Mean the Bastards Aren't Out to Get You

- ▶ ProCare's contract treated with disdain by the Northern Regional Health Authority.
- ▶ NRHA refuses to pay out on savings achieved by ProCare.
- ▶ ProCare invokes dispute mechanism.
- ▶ NRHA "reneges" on mediated settlement.
- ▶ Arbitration follows.
- ▶ When ProCare's legal, accounting and consultant costs reach nearly NZ\$1 million, forced to settle.
- ▶ Substantial sum received, although only 50% of claim.

Success Follows

- ▶ ProCare, using savings earned by the application of evidence based GP developed guidelines to referred services and prescribing management, has implemented programmes selected by GP members that have had some spectacular successes.
- ▶ Pegasus, RGPG and other IPAs have done the same thing.
- ▶ GPs are beginning to feel empowered, after a long period of demoralisation.
- ▶ Organisational activity is now spreading to include others in the GP team, including especially practice nurses.

Organised General Practice, or Organised Primary Care?

- ▶ Is there a difference?
- ▶ I don't know.