

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

K M Levy*

Madam Chairman, Professor Strauss, members of the National Executive Committee, members of Council, ladies and gentlemen.

This will be my last address to Council in my official capacity as President. It is therefore appropriate that I should look back over the years and note some of the changes that have taken place since I attended my first Council Meeting some forty years ago.

As only to be expected, there have been many changes both in the training of physiotherapists and in the practice of physiotherapy, not only in South Africa, but throughout the world, and in particular in those countries who are in membership of the "World Confederation for Physical Therapy".

As you are aware, the Society was founded in the mid-twenties by a small group of dedicated physiotherapists. Meetings were held in the large centres and the first Council Meetings were held in the treatment rooms of private practices established in the area. The Society is indeed deeply indebted to the early members who set us on our present successful path.

These included Miss Susie Oosthuizen and Miss Marjorie Catt. Miss Oosthuizen, or "Our Susie" as she was affectionately known, was the main pillar of strength upon which the foundations of the Society were laid. I well remember my farewell from the Principal of my training centre in London when I was instructed to contact "Susie" as soon as I arrived in Johannesburg and make myself useful to her and the Society. This I did, and I trust that I have followed her instructions!

Miss Catt, like her confederate, was an extremely busy private practitioner but, none the less found time to take an active part in the affairs of the Southern Transvaal and the Society as a whole. We are all most grateful to her for the substantial endowments she left to both the Southern Transvaal Branch and the National Executive Committee without which the purchase of the premises which now house the Secretariat would not have been possible. May I suggest for consideration by the Council that her name be associated permanently in some way with the new premises.

Recognition should also be given to stalwarts of the early years such as Miss Jean Blair and Miss Margaret Emslie who were responsible for the early training at the University of the Witwatersrand and the Pretoria Hospital. It should also include Mr Fred Rothberg whose professional legal knowledge in addition to his professional physiotherapy excellence was invaluable in matters affecting the Constitution.

There are of course many others who contributed to the development of the Society to its present proud state by giving generously of their time and efforts without thought to financial compensation. It can surely be said that the success of the present members of the Society can be attributed to the fact that they are standing on the shoulders of giants.

The Society was a founder member of the "World Confederation for Physiotherapy". During the years the status of South Afri-

can physiotherapy was recognised by members of the Society being elected to the Executive Committee of the Confederation as early as the nineteen-sixties. More recently however, politics reared its ugly head and there was a strong move by the Nordic countries in particular, to have the Society expelled from membership because national political policies were alleged to be contrary to the Code of Ethics of the World body. Fortunately, Sheena Irwin-Carruthers and I were able to prove to the satisfaction of the Executive Committee and later the full Council that there are no racial barriers in the SASP Constitution nor in the practice of physiotherapy in South Africa. It was pointed out in fact that the Society had been instrumental in having the clause which debars racial discrimination inserted in the original Code of Ethics.

During the course of 1990 an Africa Division of the WCPT was formed. The Society is very proud of Sheena Irwin-Carruthers who was elected its President. This recognition of South Africa's leadership in physiotherapy in Africa carries with it a responsibility of advising and assisting where possible in the provision of affordable physiotherapy services appropriate to the needs of the various African communities.

It is of the utmost importance that we recognise this responsibility and it should be high on the list of priorities for the incoming Council.

But enough of the past. What of the future? How are we as a Society and as individual physiotherapists going to ensure that we emerge from the past and move forward ready to cope with all eventualities?

The future of physiotherapy in this country will be dictated largely by Physiotherapy's contribution to the services that will be needed to provide adequate, appropriate and affordable health schemes for the total population of the new South Africa.

This will place a tremendous strain on the medical profession whose numbers are totally inadequate in relation to the whole population. There will have to be changes to optimise the use of the limited number of personnel at present available.

It has been pointed out by numerous authorities lately, including our Minister of Health in her opening address to the Congress, that this can best be done by the establishment of community health services throughout the country to provide, *inter alia*, primary physiotherapy.

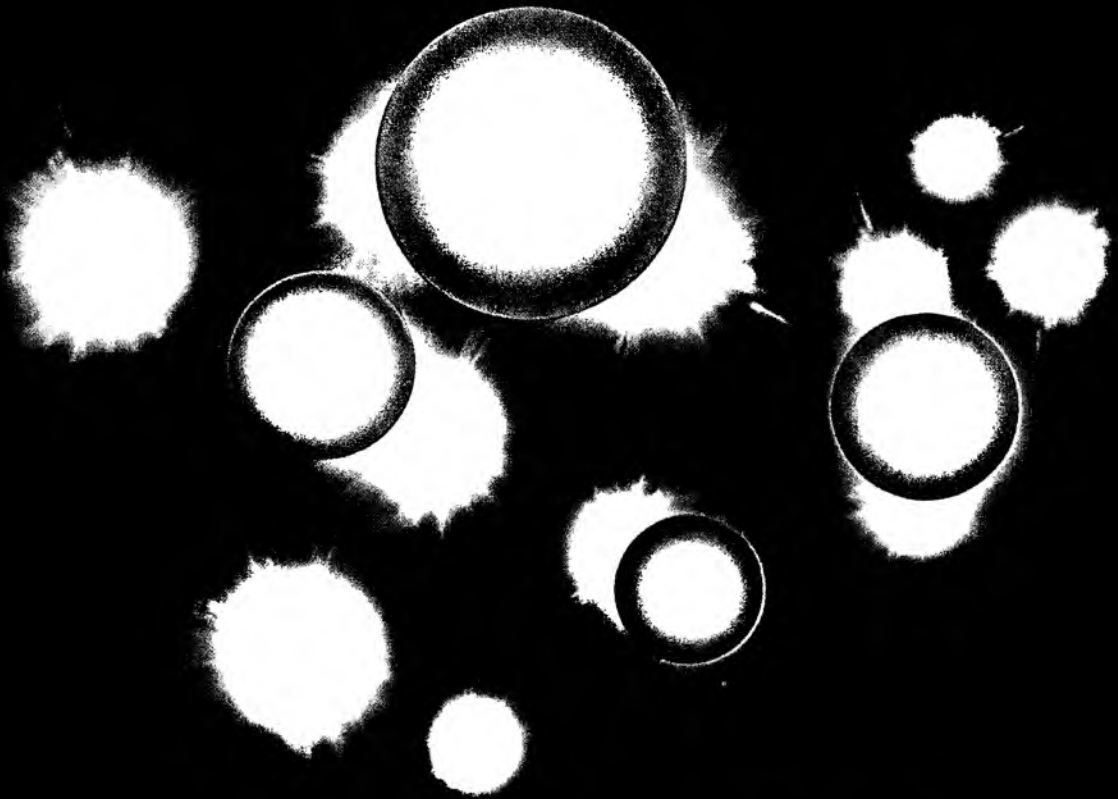
If the physiotherapy profession is unable to meet these demands there is a real danger that elementary physiotherapy procedures will be administered by other branches of the medical profession.

I am aware that this problem has been receiving the attention of the Society for some time, but the unforeseen rapid rate of change in South Africa has given it a new urgency. The solution in the context of total medical care will have to be found in a short space of time.

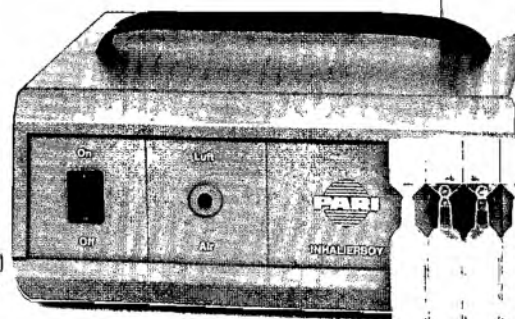
The Society faces the daunting task of providing for the basic physiotherapy needs of the total population of the country without dropping its standards. It must continue to strive for excellence in research and in the development and practice of new techniques and procedures. The close personal relationship that must always exist

* Mrs Molly Levy, President

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
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between patient and physiotherapist must be maintained.

I have every confidence that the members of the South African Society of Physiotherapy and its Council have the knowledge, experience and, particularly, wisdom and vision to take decisions in the best interests of physiotherapy, the medical profession and the country in

the period of transition that lies ahead.

Following her address Mrs Levy was given a standing ovation by all the delegates, members of the NEC, representatives and visitors.