

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

D K Gupta

Honoured guests, distinguished visitors, delegates of the conference, ladies and gentlemen.

As we meet here in this picturesque campus of Medical College, Pune, one of our prestigious institutions of the country, I take the liberty on behalf of all of us in expressing our deep sense of gratitude to the Organising Secretary, Prof. Deshpande and his team of devoted workers for organising the 15th annual conference of the Association.

I stand before you in all humility and in gratitude, conscious of the honour bestowed on me and the responsibilities that the office of the President entails. As a founder member of the IADVL, I have closely observed my illustrious predecessors in office during the past fifteen years who have spoken eloquently for the discipline of dermatology, venereology and leprology and guided the speciality. I do hope that the combined efforts of all of us will make a headway and the cherished wishes of the Association will be fulfilled in the interest of the humanity at large. The health and welfare of the patients of leprosy, sexually transmitted diseases and skin disorders is the burning topic of the day and our Association has to play an important role in eradication of these diseases, I would therefore like to suggest the ways and means to do so and seek assistance from the government agencies and social and statutory bodies in achieving the goal.

It is unfortunate that in spite of the developments in the field of this speciality and in spite

of the tremendous clinical workload at the district and primary health care levels, not even one peripheral/district hospital in the country has a specialist in dermatology, sexually transmitted diseases and leprosy. Through this Association, our endeavour should be to impress upon the Government, the need of the hour, so that the larger interest of humanity be better served. I, therefore, call upon all the Hon'ble members to do their best to achieve this goal.

That apart, most of the medical colleges in the country do not have a separate department of Dermatology, Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Leprosy, with the result that these diseases continue to pose a great problem in the country. I request you to see that separate departments at each level in this discipline be established in public interest.

You are already aware that in the 20-point and National Health Programmes, this speciality has been included. Yet in the teaching institutions, we find that this discipline is manned by 1 or 2 faculty members who are often occupying lower ladders of academic hierarchy. This Association should impress upon the Medical Council of India to include in the medical curriculum a separate subject in the professional examinations, so that medical graduates may have the aptitude to attain proper efficiency in this discipline.

Our national responsibility and commitment to the health and welfare of the masses poses before us, challenges of service, training and research and I shall briefly touch on these for your thoughtful consideration.

Health services in the country are delivered at three levels: Primary health centres, district hospitals, teaching institutions and hospitals.

It is elementary that if in the teaching institutions this discipline is not treated as a

Professor and Head, Department of Dermatology, Sexually Transmitted Diseases and Leprosy, Medical College, Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh), India, and Adviser to the Government of Madhya Pradesh on Leprosy.

Delivered at the XV National Conference of the Indian Association of Dermatologists, Venereologists and Leprologists, held at BJ Medical College, Pune, January 1987.

separate subject, efficiency in services cannot be attained. It is therefore absolutely necessary that teaching institutions impart special education in this discipline, so that graduate doctors can provide efficient services in this discipline also, at any place and office they may adorn. Our Association being one of specialists, owes a moral duty to the profession, in developing this discipline at the teaching institutions, and to attain this object the Association should take up the matter with all its might with the Medical Council of India and also with the Government of India, as well as all the state governments and universities. If this is done, only then we can expect to find significant improvement in services at district and peripheral levels. I am confident that if services at these levels are improved in the manner suggested, the 20-point and the National Health Programme could be successfully implemented to the advantage of all concerned and to the Nation in the ultimate analysis.

The system of undergraduate training and education should be moulded in such a way that every discipline including ours is treated at par with other broad specialities so that when a student comes out as a medical man, he enters the arena with the knowledge of all the disciplines alike. The Medical Council of India is yet to give active consideration to this branch of medical science, even though a remarkable size of masses suffers from such diseases and needs special attention and care in public interest. An early initiation from the Medical Council of India will help in getting the speciality its due place in the medical curriculum thereby equipping the graduates in meeting the challenge of eradication of leprosy and controlling the sexually transmitted diseases.

It is a matter of deep regret that the masses are being exploited by quacks in the country particularly in our speciality and no steps have been taken so far either by the statutory body like Medical Council of India or by the

authorities through effective legislation or otherwise. This has resulted in the flourishing of quacks at the cost of poor masses who fall an easy prey to the nefarious designs of these quacks. If the discipline is given its due, the doctors who enter the medical field either as private practitioners or the services, would be able to outweigh quackery and provide effective treatment through scientific means.

It cannot be denied that many young aspirants who look forward to specialisation, face disappointment on account of meager facilities for post-graduation. This forceful band of young men and women, who thirst for knowledge deserves our support for providing them training and future opportunity in the service of their profession. Can we deny them this?

It is painful to observe that the number of specialists in our country dealing with such wide dimensions of the three areas of service entail, is too small. Further, while it is admitted that it is the practising physician who handles most of the day to day problems. Let us turn round and ask ourselves how competent he is in doing so? The Medical Council of India consisting of learned medical educationists, does not appear to consider it necessary for the undergraduate student to qualify adequately to equip him with the competence to handle routine problems of the care of skin, sexually transmitted diseases and leprosy patients. It is time that the Council takes serious note of this and includes the subject at the final professional MBBS examination.

Knowing as we do, of the perfunctory knowledge and skills that a general practitioner picks up from medical college, it is necessary that those who are in practice or in service need to be provided refresher courses in the direction of continued medical education. This is particularly important in the case of our speciality, than for those disciplines where undergraduate base is strong.

To speak of research in dermatology, sexually transmitted diseases and leprosy, is like

constructing the first floor of a building without a ground floor. Unless services and training which form the ground floor stand strong and firm, it is inappropriate to talk of research of any sophistication, although data collection, incidence, nature and magnitude of problems can be and should be studied in regions where possible. Organised research shall however have to await the minimum infrastructure proposed as aforementioned.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is said that beauty is skin deep. Let us not be thick skinned but arise to make efforts for the removal of suffering from the ugly infirmities, infesting this beauty. To this end let us intensify and expand our advocacy for the cause of development of the speciality so that the politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats are convinced of the need for its speedy development.

I am fully confident, that, with our united

and concentrated efforts the speciality will get its due place in the teaching institutions and will also get the recognition which has been denied to it for long.

Friends, I am very grateful to you all for the opportunity given to me to address this conference. It is my earnest desire that our speciality attains the highest place in the medical world and we be regarded as pioneers in steering the medical profession in this branch of medical science.

I take this opportunity to welcome you all and express my sincere appreciation of the excellent arrangements made by the organizing committee in providing us a pleasant stay and an occasion for fruitful discussions and deliberations.

I wish you all a very happy, prosperous and peaceful 1987 and a most meaningful conference.