

INTRODUCTION

The importance of close collaboration between medical schools and ministries of health, in order to meet the changing needs of the community and strengthen health care, has been repeatedly emphasised at meetings of Commonwealth Health Ministers in recent years. At their 1977 meeting in Wellington, New Zealand, Ministers recommended that medical schools should define their goals in relation to national health needs. In 1980, when they met in Arusha, Tanzania, Health Ministers further stressed the importance of orientating medical training towards community health issues and a team approach to primary health care, and considered that such orientation could be achieved only through appropriate revisions of curricula. They also called for greater involvement of medical schools in the study of national health problems and in the strengthening of health services.

In view of these recommendations, the Commonwealth Secretariat initiated discussions with the Association of Commonwealth Universities, The Commonwealth Foundation and the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, with the object of arranging a jointly-sponsored workshop on the contribution of medical schools to national health development. This project was endorsed by Commonwealth Health Ministers at their one-day meeting in Geneva in May 1982, before the Thirty-fifth World Health Assembly, and financial support was secured from the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. The arrangements for the workshop were made jointly by the Secretariat, the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Medical Faculty of the University of Peradeniya.

The workshop was held in Kandy, Sri Lanka, from 20 to 24 September 1982. The participants were deans of medical schools and senior officials of ministries of health, mainly from developing Commonwealth countries but including in addition some representatives from the developed countries. The heads of the regional health secretariats in West Africa and in East, Central and Southern Africa also took part.

The discussions were led by Professor R G Panabokke, head of the Department of Pathology and formerly Dean of the Medical Faculty, University of Peradeniya; Professor Sir Kenneth Standard, head of the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, University of the West Indies; and Professor N R E Fendall, until recently head of the Department of International Community Health at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in Britain. Presentations were also made by representatives of the Ministries of Health of Fiji, Kenya and Malaysia .

The Chairman of the workshop was Professor M A Fernando, Dean of the Medical Faculty, University of Peradeniya. The Association of Commonwealth Universities was represented by its Secretary-General, Dr A Christodoulou, and the Commonwealth Secretariat by its Medical Adviser, Professor Sir Kenneth Stuart.

The aim of the workshop was to examine the roles that are currently played by medical schools in national, and also regional, health development, and ways in which these roles might be strengthened and extended. The workshop also considered how better collaboration between medical schools and health ministries and closer integration of their programmes might be realised.

The discussion was directed towards action and paid particular attention to the practical measures that might be taken by individual countries, by regional groups, by medical schools and by the Commonwealth Secretariat and other agencies to promote the achievement of these objectives. Although the agenda items were discussed separately, they were closely interrelated and, not surprisingly, there was some overlap in the discussion of related issues, which is reflected in the report.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the Association of Commonwealth Universities wish to record their appreciation for the help and co-operation received from the University of Peradeniya in making the arrangements for the workshop, and for the financial support provided by the Commonwealth Foundation.