

DISCUSSION PAPER

POST GRADUATE QUALIFICATIONS IN UNDERWATER
MEDICINE AND RELATED FIELDS

Beryl Turner

The purpose of this paper is to act as a discussion/working paper to facilitate the development of Post-graduate qualifications in underwater medicine and related fields, including hyperbaric medicine and caisson medicine. The parties involved in this discussion are RAN, SPUMS, and the Commonwealth Institute of Health.

THE NEED

Australia is experiencing a rapid increase in diving activities, involving industry, commercial fishermen and sports. It is estimated that 10,000 new sports divers were trained in Australia in 1979, and the current increase in oil exploration is resulting in greater offshore diving activity. The need for medical support and informed medical advice to these activities has also increased concomitantly.

BACKGROUND

The South Pacific Underwater Medicine Society (SPUMS) was formed in 1972 and in 1980 has 280 Australian members and 80 other members in the South Pacific region. The society is comprised of medical and paramedical personnel interested in Underwater Medicine and provides for discussion between such people in seminars, conferences and the SPUMS Journal.

The Royal Australian Navy School of Underwater Medicine is an underwater medicine research, clinical and training facility and conducts courses for medical Practitioners, including civilians, each year. This course is conducted in 2 components, basic and advanced, each of two weeks duration. This is followed by a one week course in hyperbaric medicine at Prince Henry Hospital Hyperbaric Unit.

The Commonwealth Institute of Health was formed in March 1980 from the Institute of Occupational Medicine and the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. It is funded by the Department of Health, is situated in Sydney University Campus and has academic liaison with the University. A College of Occupational Medicine will be formed from within the Institute in 1983-4.

THE PROPOSITION

Underwater Medicine and related fields are probably best described as a specialty within Occupational Medicine. For the purpose of Post-graduate qualification it is not feasible to consider Underwater Medicine a separate entity necessitating a separate college in the long term.

It is proposed that: Post-graduate qualifications in Underwater Medicine and related fields be administered by the Commonwealth Institute of Health in the short

term and by the College of Occupational Medicine in the long term.

To develop post-graduate qualifications in this field along the following lines:

1. Medical Examiner in Underwater Medicine. This would be a certificate level qualification issued on completion of a 4 week course in diving medicine conducted at the School of Underwater Medicine and a 1 week course in hyperbaric medicine conducted at Prince Henry Hospital. Both courses would qualify a medical Practitioner to conduct suitability and annual medicals for divers.

2. Diploma of Occupational Medicine. (Underwater Medicine). This would be a diploma level qualification issued on completion of both the certificate and the DOM which will be offered by the Institute in 1982 for the first time. This would be an academic qualification only and would not qualify the Practitioner to charge specialist fees under the terms of NASQAC.

3. FACOM. An underwater medicine practitioner would be admitted to the College of Occupational Medicine (when formed) as a Fellow if he was the holder of a DOM (Underwater Medicine) and had practised underwater medicine for a period of 7 years. The 7 year period is a standard time scale specified by NASQAC for admission to a College as a Fellow. This qualification would allow the practitioner to charge specialist fees under the terms of NASQAC.

TIME SCALE

| | | |
|-------------|---|---------|
| Certificate | - | 1981 |
| Diploma | - | 1982 |
| Fellowship | - | 1983-84 |

Dr Turner was, at the time of writing this paper, the Officer in Charge, RAN School of Underwater Medicine.

SOUTH AFRICAN CODE OF PRACTICE
FOR RESEARCH DIVERS

The South African Bureau of Standards has published a Code of Practice and diver scientists are now able to register with the Department of Manpower Utilisation and entitled to international recognition by obtaining a CMAS Scientific Diver Brevet. They must first hold a CMAS 3-star diver certificate and complete an application form stating their scientific affiliation, with approval of a scientific diving association (eg. Barologia) and an establishment of learning or research (a nice distinction!). The Standard, as judged from the summary available, appears to cover both performance and organisation of all areas of diving, in all kinds of conditions. The publication consists of 160+ pages including figures, diagrams and tables, and is priced R20 plus 4% GST and postage. It may be obtained from the South African Bureau of Standards, Private Bag X191, Pretoria, RSA. 0001