ARE YOU FEELING THREATENED?

At the end of the 1950’s with the discovery of the Salk vaccine physiotherapists were worried that their work would disappear. Of there were no more polios to treat what would we do? All that happened was that the work expanded. Surgeons started closing myelomeningoceles and a whole new generation of patients was created. New artificial joints were invented and we were in business. When one door closes another opens.

It was very noticeable at our recent Physiotherapy Congress that the chest physiotherapists were feeling threatened. A plethora of research into chest physiotherapy over the past fifteen years has been questioning the value of the various manoeuvres carried out by chest physiotherapists. This is no threat to you or the work you do. What will eventuate is a more refined and effective regimen of chest physiotherapy. What you will do will actively benefit the patient without your having to merely assume that the patient feels better and without your being able to prove any benefit.

You need not feel bound by treatment regimens. You are becoming more and more essential in preventive work. The world health scene is changing into a wellness demand and your expertise must expand into this area. This latter is of course a First World concept and although we as health professionals need to be involved, we do not have the human resources.

Third World health problems are overwhelming. There are still polios to treat! The number of patients needing real rehabilitative therapy is growing. We must overcome ignorance and superstition. Every single person in the community has a right to the best we can offer - not First World options, but Third World requirements which will fit the disabled into their communities as productive members.

No physiotherapist in this country needs to feel threatened. The work is there - far too much indeed for individuals to cope with. You need to combine with other health professionals to provide an optimum rehabilitation service available to all.

So when you are feeling depressed about midwives, bio­kineticians, chiropractors etc. “taking your work away” look around you. The field of rehabilitation and prevention is wide open. The patients are waiting for you.