

HEALTH PERSONNEL: WHO PRESS RELEASE WHO/24 OF 23 APRIL, 1976**RADICAL CHANGES REQUIRED IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Radical changes in health manpower development are required in the coming years to make it relevant to present and foreseeable future community health requirements.

The need for “non-traditional” solutions to health personnel problems plaguing almost every country in the world today is stressed by the Director-General of the World Health Organization in his report on health manpower development prepared for the 29th World Health Assembly, meeting in Geneva on 3 May, 1976.

Changes can only be carried out in the countries, and by the countries themselves, WHO playing its role as directing and coordinating authority for international health work. The task of WHO is to function as a change agent, stimulating thought and action, and promoting innovations—“often in the face of conventional wisdom”, says the report.

The need for non-traditional solutions stems directly from the realization that simply to train more doctors and nurses who are mainly orientated towards diseases and hospitals will not solve health problems in the foreseeable future.

This means that in addition to the emphasis laid on “classical” categories of health workers—such as physicians and nurses—a new strong emphasis should be laid on the training and utilization of auxiliary and community health workers and their supervisors.

Far from being diminished, the number, role and importance of “classical” health workers will have to be increased. Their education—properly geared to the progress of science and to the needs of society—must be made relevant to community health needs and demands without reducing its basic quality.

Health professionals, says the report, should be prepared for their leadership role in the health team and in community development so that, through the use of auxiliaries, a much broader part of the community will benefit from their knowledge and skill.