



The blight of bureaucracy

To the Editor: I recently retired from active practice as a private gynaecologist, moving to the rural heart of the Great Karoo, where I still run a small 'office gynaecology' practice. A few months after settling in, I was requested by an administrative head of the primary health care clinics in the area to do some clinics for them. I thought this would be a good way of ploughing something back into the community where I had grown up, so I lodged the required application as requested. I heard nothing, not even acknowledgement of receipt, for the best part of six weeks. Eventually, the same officer phoned and informed me that I needed also to produce my matric certificate, despite having produced proof of registration as a specialist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa. I had written matric some 46 years ago, and could no longer produce the required proof of my matriculation qualification. Another high-rank official from the same office later phoned to stress to me that my 'application could not be processed' unless I produced that matric certificate; it was an absolute requirement. Unfortunately, that was also the end of our negotiations. So everyone potentially concerned missed out on a nice opportunity to do something worthwhile for the community where, according to local newspapers, there is a serious shortage of doctors, especially so-called 'scarce-skills' personnel.

I thought the *SAMJ* letters column would be a good forum for drawing the attention of other professionals to the need to hold on to those matric certificates, whatever you do. I remain stunned by this demonstration of a morbidly bleak and blighted mentality.

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