

# Academic radiology — *quo vadis?*

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We all know that academic radiology has come to a major crossroad, but as once noted by a great social commentator, Dr Martin Luther King junior, 'It is through difficulty that we learn our greatest lessons'.

As radiologists we stand well into the first days of the 21st century, but in general we still work and think as subjects of the 20th century. The radiologist in the private sector obtains new equipment, and this is used to the advantage of those who can financially afford the cost.

But spare a moment for academic institutions, the place where the next generation of 21st century radiologists is trained. As so well put by a previous Editor of the SAJR (February 2001) – *quo vadis?* As part of the academic sector I now ask: *quo vadis* Academic Radiology?

It is sad for me to note that the entire panel of examiners for the MMed (where it still exists) and the FCR (Rad) (D) SA consists of only a few people. Where do our interests lie? We all expect good qualified radiologists as partners, but find it difficult to find people to be part of their training and preparation, enabling them to follow in our footsteps when we leave for greener pastures.

*Quo vadis* radiology when we are 46 fewer practising radiologists than 9 years ago, with a population growth of nearly 4.8 million people and a pandemic of AIDS awaiting us.

I ask why the government keeps our salaries and budgets cut so that the academic sector can't even pay close to what can be earned in the private sector. Turf wars are the name of the game and fighting between radiologists continues, while the other fields of specialists chip away at our field of work. It is known that in certain parts of Europe 50% of radiology is done by non-radiologists. We use old equipment in training young radiologists, as minimal funds are available for new equipment. In academic radiology we fight to keep some of the newly qualified radiologists to ensure that radiologists of a high calibre can be trained for the public and private sector.

I am sure that every radiologist in this country would prefer to see strong academic units so that we can maintain the standard of training and make it possible for young graduates to remain in these units for a period and help with training. The reason so often given for leaving the country is to obtain more knowledge, utilising scholarships and then often not returning. I am sure we want to have sub-specialist units, centres of excellence, and to register these with SAQA.

My quest for the 21st century and for radiology is for us to be the best we can, but in the words of Jan Brandt, a previous president of South Africa, this can only become true if we all play our part. Sadly I must keep on repeating the words for everyone's ears, minds and souls to be touched. In our specialist field Radiology, you the Radiologist must decide.

*Quo vadis* Academic Radiology?

**Julian Höll**

Editor