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Chairman of Council on Medical
Education and Hospitals
Section Chairman of Convention Sections
Presidents of Component Societies
Administrative Secretary

Gentlemen:

As a result of my thinking about the topic to be discussed and opinions which have come to me during my visits of Component Societies this year and during my president-elect year, I have decided that I would write this letter to crystallize these opinions and set up a new function.

I believe that there is a consensus of acceptability around the country for the establishment of an "SCF" - meaning Specialty Conventions Forum. This would be an organized effort to set up an informal semi-social forum each year at the time and place of Specialty Conventions where members of the National Medical Association would be hosted by members of local Component Societies to discuss problems of human relations in medicine with special reference to the given specialty. In an unorganized fashion through the years, local physicians have given social affairs for such visiting physicians. We would now like to organize it under the aegis of the Council on Medical Education and Hospitals -- especially since this Council at the 70th convention was given the new function of handling and helping to solve problems of the NMA regarding human rights and civil rights in medical practice.

At an appropriate pre-arranged evening during these conventions, along with appropriate social amenities, the local chairman would conduct a forum on hospital staff problems within the specialty; meaningful integration at the conventions and within your specialty society; counseling with an aim toward help in placement of young Negro residents and beginning specialists in your society, including distribution and area needs of young specialists in the field; contribution of information on opportunities for salaried specialists appointments to hospitals, medical faculties, other institutions, private practice; information from communities which may need specialists or general practitioners, thus aiding near the grass roots the problem of redistribution of doctors; setting up a practicing ethical code with reference to the reception of young doctors in the community to help them get started.

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In a discussion at one Component Society, I learned the dilemma of young trained specialists beginning practice on such problems as how much help to expect, how much resistance to be anticipated. I have found that young Negro specialists are discouraged to the point of getting out of the specialty for which they are trained when a little thoughtfulness, or an organized plan of ethical code, might do a great service -- especially should the SCF counsel themselves on the continuing battle for meaningful integration of physicians in their community and of their patients. This could be extended to direct contacts of hospitals. The American Academy of General Practice should be involved in setting up an SCF group. Contact of these activities should be made to the Council on Medical Education chairman and vice versa.

I am asking the administrative secretary to use the calendar which I am forwarding and to place a note on his correspondence schedule to notify a given specialty chairman of the SCF activity, with a copy to the president of the Component Society at the convention place two months ahead of time. This could become fairly routine and automatic once established. The request of the administrative secretary is necessary for continuity since chairman of councils change frequently. The newly integrated members of the NMA would attend these councils and could be very helpful. These forums could become the "smoke-filled rooms" where the real and meaningful decisions could be made to get you on committees and to hold offices in your specialty societies and meaningful integration within your specialty and your local hospitals. You would send notes on your activities when appropriate to the Journal of NMA from time to time.

I pray that you will see the advantage and set this program going immediately. Yours for the best interest for the growth of the NMA and improvement in human relations in medicine.

Sincerely,

Leonidas H. Berry, M.D.
President

LHB/ld

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Council Med Ed
Joseph W M

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