For just over a decade in the mid-twentieth century, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, South Africa was widely acknowledged as being in the forefront of progressive thought in health care delivery, its distinctive social conditions and developed medical practice making possible an experiment in social medicine with far-reaching implications. These two lectures trace the story to its South African roots in the 1930s and 1940s, its propagation via the subsequent diaspora of progressive physicians, and its links to kindred developments throughout the world. Its vision of a community-based, equitable, effective, inclusive, low cost approach to health emphasizing prevention and education may offer a distinctive model for Universal Health Coverage.

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