Woman’s prerogative, and all that

Oh dear. I hate it when I change my mind. I know that I’m allowed to, but I always feel guilty about it. Last month, I promised you that I would publish more about Conference in this month’s *S Afr Pharm J*. And I really intended to. I wanted to share with you the Youth Day presentations made at the Conference. You need to hear about Bada Pharasi’s experience, and you need to be blown away by the enthusiasm of Walter Mbatha and Raydon Juta.

I know that I said I’d publish it this month, and my failure to do so clearly indicates that I am not a gentleman, but I already knew that.

Why did I break my promise to you?

Two reasons, actually. It takes an awful lot of time to transcribe speeches and rewrite them as articles. And I have to admit I got side-tracked by events happening around me.

Pharmacy Week: focal point or side-track?

What does Pharmacy Week mean in your life? Does it mean anything? I know that for lots of people, it’s just another week in their lives, and it passes unnoticed. I know that for others, it’s a focal point in their year. There are many pharmacists who take advantage of it to showcase their services and to educate their community. We’re always happy to hear about them, and we make a point of sharing their photographs with you.

Doing us proud

My particular side-track this month was created by the City of Tshwane’s Pharmaceutical Services. Their Pharmacy Week launch happened two days ago, just as I was finishing off my contributions to the *S Afr Pharm J*. It not only side-tracked me, it also derailed me.

I made the decision to postpone the Conference presentations by another month so that I could make space to share with you the City’s Pharmacy Week activities. It was an excellent example of cooperation and interaction, with City Councillors, pharmacists and pharmacy students mingling with members of the Atteridgeville community. Everything about medicines was discussed, from adherence to treatment protocols to recognising substance abuse.

Why did I tell you about it?

By the time you read this, Pharmacy Week will be done and dusted for another year. So why did I bother to mention it? Obviously I have an ulterior motive!

Have you sent your Pharmacy Week contribution to the PSSA national office yet? Apart from the fact that we’d like to hear about your activities, don’t forget the prizes that are offered to four PSSA members in different sectors of pharmacy.

All PSSA members are invited to submit their reports on their Pharmacy Week experiences. Please send us a short description of what you did (no more than 800 words), plus photographs in jpeg format. Some of the reports will be published in the *S Afr Pharm J*. Entries can be sent to pssa.newsletter@pharmail.co.za. Please indicate your PSSA number on your entry. Remember that, if it is a group effort, you need to indicate who the PSSA members are.

Show us how creative you were!

Marketing the profession

Obviously, if you are involved in Pharmacy Week activities, you are marketing the profession, and we all appreciate that. Is it enough? Surely someone should do something? Surely the PSSA should do something?

Following the National Executive Committee’s deliberations on implementation of the PSSA’s strategic plan, it was decided that an aggressive marketing campaign would be beneficial. This would, however, be extremely expensive, so it was also decided that a referendum should be held. Pharmacists will be asked if, in addition to their PSSA subscription fee, they will be prepared to pay an additional amount into a ring-fenced account that will be used solely for advertising and marketing activities. If you’re as old as I am, you will remember that this is what was done for the Pharmacy Professional Awareness Campaign (PPAC) decades ago. There are still people who remember Mrs Pereira!

I’m not asking you to let me know what your opinion of this is right now, but please start thinking about it. We will send an e-newsletter requesting your input and then we’d really appreciate your thoughts.

So, who was Mrs Pereira?

The young pharmacists among us won’t remember Mrs Pereira, but she became very well known. She was the subject of a television advertisement, a worried Portuguese lady who needed her medicine, but didn’t know what the South African equivalent was. Of course, her trusty pharmacist knew. (Or at least had a Martindale or the Drug Information Centre’s phone number!) Of all the PPAC advertisements, this was the one that consumers remembered.

A close second was the concerned mom who searched in her medicine chest for medicine for a crying baby. All parents have been there. In fact, one of the reasons that I chose to study pharmacy was because, when my children were babies, I made good friends with my pharmacist. Christine, if you’re reading this – thank you for showing me the way to a satisfying career.

Lorraine Osman