Congratulations

I've known James Meakings for a looooooooooooong time; since he was a student, so that tells you just how long. He was recently appointed to the Pharmacy Council for the remainder of the current Council’s term of office.

I'm sure that you join me in congratulating James on his appointment. It really is an honour to serve on Council. When you think about it, only nine pharmacists are elected to Council, out of the more than 12 000 on the register. So it is a rare honour.

I'm equally sure that you join me in wishing him strength and resilience. He'll need both.

Not knowing your “effect” from your “affect”

Let me say up front, I have zero tolerance for fraud. If a pharmacist defrauds a medical scheme, he or she must face the consequences. However, I do understand the frustration of dealing with some of the schemes and I have read with interest the correspondence that we have published in the SAPJ.

I also have zero tolerance for unprofessional communication from an official, especially when it purports to come from someone whose home language is ostensibly English. And no, I’m not being mean about typos. I also type fast which means that there will inevitably be inaccuracies. And I think faster than I type, so sometimes I don’t notice that what pours through my fingers is not an accurate reflection of my thoughts. That’s why it’s important to have someone else read important communications. That’s why Nitsa has to read everything I write, just in case I’ve written gibberish. (As opposed to drivel. There’s no cure for that.)

I recently read a letter from a medical scheme that initially had me screaming internally, but then had me giggling: “XYZ advices you that with affect from 15 March 2013, you will no longer be paid directly for services/products supplied to XYZ members”.

At first, I wanted to throw the writer of the sentence out of the window. But then I saw that the sentence had so much more possibility than I had initially thought. There’s no hope for “advices”, but “with affect”? She obviously doesn’t know the difference between a noun and a verb. After all, she used the noun “advice” when she clearly meant the verb “advise”. So perhaps she didn’t know the difference between the noun “effect” and the verb “affect”.

Then I started thinking. Perhaps she meant the noun “affect”, which means something completely different. Would she advise the pharmacist with affect? Or would the pharmacist react with affect? And what kind of affect? Blunted, no doubt, if it was the writer of the letter.

Lelik is niks, maar dom!

As my grandmother used to say! And I fully concur, especially seeing that I’m the one who was stupid this month. In fact, I’m blushing as I write! I was at the SAAHIP conference recently and I gave a presentation using a PowerPoint® presentation. On the floor in front of me was a computer monitor so that I could look at the slides without turning around. Afterwards, a friend came up to me and asked: “Why did you point the remote control at the monitor all the time? Quite a few presenters have also done that”.

Of course, when she said that, I realised that it was totally unnecessary (and useless) to point a wireless remote at the monitor every time I wanted to advance a slide. But I had no idea why I was doing it. Until I arrived at home after the conference, parked myself in front of the TV, picked up the remote control and found myself aiming it carefully at the decoder. Oops. The penny finally dropped. Clearly, I am far too familiar with aiming a remote at a sensor in front of me! How embarrassing!

And just by the way...

The presentation I gave was way outside my comfort zone! And I stressed more about it than I have ever done before over any other presentation. Why? I deliver presentations all the time. It’s what I do. So surely it should be second nature at this stage of my life? Not at all. The presentation was a Pearl presentation. If you’ve never had the privilege of attending a SAAHIP conference, let me tell you that it’s worth it just for the Pearls. The Pearl is a five-minute presentation on an important topic. Give me an hour to talk, and I can manage just fine. Well, almost. I can probably do better with two hours. Give me 45 minutes, and that’s fairly difficult, but still manageable. Thirty minutes? Not nearly enough! You must be joking! That’s only 300 seconds! How many syllables is that? And words? Not nearly enough!

So a Pearl presentation is a serious challenge, and I’ve always enjoyed listening to them. Presenting them? Nope. That’s scary! So well done to Palesa Santho who won the Pearl award, and to all the other Pearl presenters. I’ve always thought that you are wonderful. Now I know that you are!

Lorraine Osman