South African Pharmacy Council conference

Oh well. It’s come and gone. It’s quite scary actually; for all the work and preparation that goes into a conference, it really should last at least two weeks. And if you were on the organising committee, you should be given a month’s leave.

Mind you, the same applies to weddings, doesn’t it? All that work, for just a few hours of celebration with family and friends. Luckily, most people appreciate it. And the preparation actually forms part of the event, so maybe it does actually last for weeks, and even months.

I’m not saying that the conference was like a wedding, but there were similarities, not just in the preparation. It was a family gathering with all the older friends and relatives. Some of whom should have retired years ago and there was the younger generation who you’ve heard about, but never met, as well as the people you love spending time with, and the ones to whom you would rather choose not to talk. All of them have their own opinions, some of which are diametrically opposed to your own. Guess which ones wanted to tell you what you should be doing in your professional life?

The Minister of Health is well respected, and for good reason. It really was a privilege for us to have him at the conference, sharing his vision for the future of health care in the country. He identified and addressed the concerns that we would have discussed with him, had we arranged a meeting for that purpose. In short, he is in touch with many of our everyday frustrations, despite the fact that his responsibilities include high-level policy.

Humphrey Zokufa, who was Programme Director for that session, summed it up well. He said: “That is what you expect from the Minister of Health. The way his structured the address, he told you about international trends and events what was going on healthwise globally, zoomed into the South African situation generally speaking, zoomed in to specifically the pharmacy profession and what you’re going to do, and he challenged the conference to address that”.

The lighter side of the Aaron Motsoaledi

Humphrey’s introduction of the Minister hinted at a more personal side that was to be revealed in his speech. He said: “That is what you expect from the Minister of Health. The way his structured the address, he told you about international trends and events what was going on healthwise globally, zoomed into the South African situation generally speaking, zoomed in to specifically the pharmacy profession and what you’re going to do, and he challenged the conference to address that”.

I have been given a very difficult task, of assuring a long and healthy life for South Africans. It is difficult because many of them want to die early and we are forcing them to live longer. Many deliberately live recklessly. If you read the National Planning Commission or the country’s vision 2030 of that commission chaired by Minister Trevor Manuel, he said that one of the achievements should be that life expectancy must be 70 years. That is in the Bible, and yet there are many people who have decided to defy the Bible and die very early. Now I have been given the job to convince them to live longer.

What do you say to people who are eating, drinking or smoking themselves to death? And I must convince them not to do so. It is a daunting task, but I believe that working together, we can do it”.

Lorraine Osman