Celebrating our stars

The next issue of the SAPJ will carry more information about the recent International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) conference, but in the meantime there is a burning issue that I can’t wait to share with you.

Andy Gray, our very own Andy Gray, has been honoured at FIP. At the Conference, fellowship of FIP was conferred on him. Well done, Andy! It’s richly deserved!

Mariet Eksteen was also in the spotlight. She was elected Chair of the FIP Young Pharmacists’ Group. Gratz, Mariet! We’ll publish your first article in the SAPJ next month!

I must also mention that a member of staff at our office, Anri Hornsveld, featured prominently too. Last year, delegates were introduced to the new “I am a pharmacist” website by viewing a video of Thanushya Pillaye. This year, the video of Anri was shown. If you haven’t seen it yet, go to http://iamapharmacist.com/south-africa-I-am-a-pharmacist-3/2013/02/26. Perhaps you might even feel inspired to record your own positive experiences and submit them to the website as well.

The President’s message

Johann and I graduated as pharmacists in the same year. Therefore, it came as a shock to read that he started off as a pharmacist hundreds of years ago. I had no idea that so much time had passed, although I agree that it feels like it!

In his column, Johann writes about the theme of the 2013 FIP Congress. The basic message is clear: one size doesn’t fit all when it comes to supplying pharmaceutical services. We know that. What we sometimes forget is that change is pervasive. Patients needs change: service delivery, technology and knowledge changes. No wonder we need CPD!

Focusing on the patient

Looking through the FIP programme, I’m really sorry that I wasn’t able to be there. The focus on complex patients is both essential and fascinating. The way in which pharmacy must adapt to meet patients’ evolving needs is even more interesting.

Sometimes the need has always existed, but it is only now that we are finding ways with which to deal with it. At the CPA conference in August, a day was devoted to a workshop that examined the way in which pharmacists interact with patients with physical or mental disabilities, and in particular ways that technology can be used to overcome communication barriers.

The presentation at the recent 3’s Company Pharmacy Conference by a young pharmacist from the University of the Western Cape was a personal highlight for me. Mariam Parker is working towards her PhD, and she presented some exciting work on how to improve communication with deaf patients. I’m hoping that I’ll be able to twist her arm (gently so that she can still type), and that she’ll write something, so that the SAPJ can share her novel ideas with you.

Our erudite colleagues

You know that when I read the SAPJ, I generally get sidetracked in my mind. I’m supposed to be checking the content, and I do, but it’s so easy to be lead astray by what I read.

This month was no exception, and both Stéphan Möller and Gary Black distracted me from matters pharmaceutical. And for the same reason.

“Behemoth! What a word! Do you know anyone who uses it in conversation? I don’t. Well, I didn’t until this month. And to be totally honest, which I have to be with you, I didn’t really understand the word. I understood the context in which it is used, and I understood the sentence, but the dictionary definition of the word wasn’t in my personal vocabulary.

Just in case you’re too embarrassed to admit that you are also not familiar with this word, I’ll share my research with you. It’s an ancient word. It was used in the Bible, in Job, chapter 40, to describe a huge and powerful animal. There is speculation that the description fits that of a hippopotamus. Nowadays, it can be used to describe anything of “monstrous size”, which certainly applies to the first computers. Or it may describe anything of “monstrous power”, which certainly doesn’t apply to the first computers.

Thank you, Stéphan.

Then there was Mr Black’s contribution to my thoughts this month. He is clearly a man of many talents. By now, we are accustomed to Johann’s Latin quotations, but he may be challenged by Gary who ended his article by quoting Socrates. Is this the sign of things to come?

Some favourite quotations

This month, I’ll leave you with two of my own favourite quotations. The first accurately describes how I react to words, especially to the words’ right to be young. The second amuses me, mainly because I wonder which of my friends it describes!

“I am a dreamer of words, of written words. I think I am reading; a word stops me. I leave the page. The syllables of the word begin to move around. Stressed accents begin to invert. The word abandons its meaning and power. Then words wander away, looking in the nooks and crannies of vocabulary for new company. And for the same reason. I’m supposed to be lead astray by what I read.” – Gaston Bachelard

“Master and Doctor are my titles for ten years now, without repose, I’ve held my erudite recitals and led my pupils by the nose.” – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Lorraine Osman