The woes of moving office

What a month (and a half) it has been since I last wrote to you! As you no doubt know (and you will because you read last month’s SAPJ, didn’t you?), the PSSA National office has relocated from Arcadia to Lynnwood. It was long overdue, and we are not unhappy that we have moved.

The problem is that it is traumatic to move. Anyone who has moved home or office in the last 10-20 years will know this. It is probable that you still have unpacked boxes in your garage, and can’t find a thing (apart from those few paragons of virtue who pack and unpack immediately.)

In our case, it was a good opportunity to sort out which documents we needed for our archives, which we actually work with, and those that we could donate for recycling. There was a huge heap in the last category.

Our new offices are very pleasant, and we’ve settled in well, but it was traumatic. Why? You know me. I very nearly didn’t survive the fact that there was absolutely nothing that Telkom could do about the incessant deluge of rain. Even I had to acknowledge that. The result was that they couldn’t work on the underground cables. And the outcome of that? No telephone, no e-mail and no Internet. I know that probably sounds like paradise to some people, but not when your work depends on all three. And we were supposed to be working on the SAPJ and the conference.

Now we’re back to what passes for normal, and it’s an absolute pleasure. We finally have the SAPJ back on track (I hope) and we’re going to have a conference. Soon. I hope you’ll be there!

Important Government Gazettes

One of the things that fell between the cracks while we were waiting for the rain to subside and for the arrival of our communication lifeline, was that a very important Government Gazette was published.

In November last year, there was an amendment to the General Regulations of the Medicines and Related Substances Act 101 of 1965. The changes included regulations on complementary and alternative medicines (CAMS), and in effect issued a call for registration of these medicines, together with a timeline. So far so good. We published the roadmap for registration of CAMS in the January/February issue of the SAPJ.

I have recently been bothered by statements about melatonin and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA). I read (on Facebook of course, where else?) that a manufacturer said that the new regulations meant that these substances couldn’t be sold in South Africa. Huh? Surely, the new regulations mean that products must be registered if they are sold here? Is there a problem with that? Really?

Then on 11 February 2014, amendments to the schedules were published. Among other amendments, the schedules of specific probiotics, vitamins and minerals were spelt out. It’s important to remember that much of the scheduling remained the same, but probiotics, vitamins and minerals were covered by general statements in the past.

For example, take the case of vitamin B injections. A previous amendment was that all injections that were not listed in another schedule were Schedule 3. In my head, that occurred in 2003, but I might be mistaken. The schedule changes on 11 February specifically mention that vitamin B injections (all of them, i.e. 1, 2, 5, 6 and 12) are Schedule 3. Can anyone explain why everybody got into a tizz because they thought that the injections had been rescheduled? It wasn’t anything new; just a little housekeeping for clarity.

The point is, though, that it is now very clear to me that I need to spend some time with the new schedules, and to analyse them so that I can give you the information that you need. I’m sorry I couldn’t do it before, but I must definitely do it now. I’ll let you know in due course what the exact changes are.

I wish I’d written that

You know that I envy people who use just the right words when they’re speaking. I also envy people who use just the right words when they write. This month, the object of my envy is Jan du Toit, the new Executive Director of the Community Pharmacist Sector (CPS). If you received the CPS newsletter calling for comment on the draft criteria for the licensing of pharmacies, you’ll know why. He made the process of commenting sound so easy and logical, just as it should be. If I plagiarise his words in future, I hope he’ll forgive me. I shall be watching his writing with interest, just in case there’s something else that I need to adopt!

Lorraine Osman