Peace of mind

Yes. You read this correctly. I'm giving you a piece of my mind about peace of mind, but first let me share the opposite. I asked the authority (Mr Google) and was totally confused by one of the hits, which said that there is no opposite to peace of mind. One reference defined peace of mind as the absence of mental stress or anxiety, and my logic says that the opposite would be the presence of mental stress or anxiety, which about sums it up. Luckily my guru (Roget's 21st century Thesaurus) says that there are indeed antonyms – misery, pain, gloom, dissatisfaction and unhappiness being but a few. And we know those feelings, don't we? Especially when it comes to professional liability.

We've spoken before about professional indemnity insurance and how important it is that every pharmacist and pharmacist’s assistant needs their own insurance. You know the product that is offered on the PSSA’s behalf by PPS. But there's more to the story.

I was recently privileged enough to attend a Medico-legal Workshop and a Medico-legal Summit, both convened and hosted by the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi.

I'll share more of the presentations with you at a later stage, and there will also be a declaration issued when the comments submitted by six commissions of the Summit have been analysed and correlated. In the meantime, though, I want to share a few facts with you.

The number of medical negligence cases faced by the public sector has escalated exponentially in recent years, particularly since legal firms started urging consumers to sue. In 2013/2014, the capital amount paid by the state, excluding legal costs, was about R 500 million rand. The current contingency liability has been estimated to be R 24 billion. You read that correctly too. Gauteng province alone has 1700 matters being processed, 95% of which is for cerebral palsy cases. More on this next month.

I have more peace of mind from the realisation that pharmacists have not faced the same kind of claims. In 2014, PPS settled two large cases, which together came to just above R 1 million. We cannot be negligent, but we can sleep better at night knowing that we have Professional Indemnity Insurance.

Benevolent sexism

When you decide to follow a career in research, how do you decide on a topic? In pharmacy, unless you have a one-tracked career mind, I think it’s seriously difficult. There are so many equally important things that we don’t know enough about. So we’re really spoilt for choice.

Other fields however can be a real mystery to me. What gets one started on research into sexism? And how does the researcher justify her conclusions? I deliberately say “her” conclusions because I’ve just read a newspaper report on research undertaken in America on types of sexism in men. The spokesman (sic) (intentional) was a woman professor, and she explained that there are two types of sexism – hostile and benevolent.

I understand the concept of hostile sexism. An example given was the man who thinks that women tend to exaggerate problems at work. Um. That’s probably most men I know. And they don’t realise that sometimes we need to exaggerate because nothing short of a tidal wave will get their attention. Yep. Hostile is right.

But benevolent sexism? Holding doors open for women or offering their jacket if the woman looks cold? That can be harmful? The professor said that this perpetuates support for gender inequality among women, and entices women to accept the status quo in society. Apparently these men see women as “warm and pure, yet helpless and incompetent beings”. That sounds pretty hostile to me. And I still don’t get it that a little common courtesy, politeness or thoughtfulness can be sexism. After all, any menopausal woman would offer her jersey to a man who looks cold, wouldn’t she?

Picking on the President

I have to do it while I can. Last month, I had no choice. I had to call our president, Dr Johann Kruger, and ask him why his SAPJ column did not have a Latin heading for the first time since July 2012. He listened, he heard, he reacted. And I’ll leave it to him to translate that!

This month, Johann uses an interesting Latin quotation to introduce a really important analogy. I guess we all go through phases where we feel that we’re battling alone and achieving very little. And Johann is right – if we work together, we can achieve greatness. His advice comes at the right time – we have a new SAAHIP president, so I may as well mention him now too. Joggie Hattingh also calls for us to stand together to find solutions to national problems. Read the Forum page, where he shares his concerns for service delivery with us.

Having now finished with PSSA and its sectors’ contributions to the SAPJ, I can now breathe a sigh of relief. I’ll close for this month by also giving you a Latin sentence. Cheers!

Bonum vinum laetificat cor hominis – Good wine gladdens a person’s heart!

Lorraine Osman