Synchronicity

If it sounds like déjà vu, it’s because it is! I’ve said it before, and I have no doubt that I’ll say it again. I’m always fascinated when our leaders who write for the SAPJ independently submit articles, for the same month, that deal with the same urgent issue that faces pharmacy.

This month, the issue is leadership. Both Sue Putter and Johann Kruger have written about various aspects of leadership. Don’t think that the articles are the same, though – you need to read both articles! Johann deals with the application of leadership qualities in practice, and the effect that it has on pharmaceutical service delivery, while Sue and her team talk about fostering the development and use of leaders in our profession. Both are really important.

The WHO/FIP concept of the seven star pharmacist (or eight star, depending on which article you read!) was introduced to guide young pharmacists in the role of the pharmacist. In case you graduated before 2006, the pharmacist is described as a caregiver, communicator, decision-maker, teacher, lifelong learner, leader, manager and researcher.

Leadership is a critical current topic. Elections are due for the CPS and PSSA national executive committees, including the presidential committee, in May. What is your opinion? Do we have leaders waiting in the wings? Has your branch or sector developed leaders that can serve on the national executive committee? Have you nurtured young pharmacists, so that we oldies can retire gracefully? Or are our older, more experienced pharmacists “hogging the platform”, in Doug Defty’s immortal words? (Or were Doug’s words pearls before swine? I refuse to go there.)

Read about the initiative of the Young Pharmacists’ Group. Isn’t this what professional leadership is all about? I suspect … no, I hope … actually, I trust that the young pharmacists are going to develop a culture of challenging and improving the status quo. Let’s help them, not hinder them.

Perception is reality?

Johann mentioned in passing that as pharmacists, we may choose to practice individually or as part of the healthcare team. Speaking to a senior member of staff of the National Department of Higher Education and Training recently, it was very clear that there is a perception that pharmacists do not want to work in multi-disciplinary teams, or don’t make the effort. This was cited as one of the main problems with pharmacists. Now, this was an informal chat but it was enlightening – it showed that this is a perception that we need to manage and, if possible, change. So there’s a challenge for you – what are you doing in your practice setting to foster multi-disciplinary cooperation, rather than merely working on a “good relationship”?

Quality of care

Joggie Hattingh’s column also speaks about the qualities of the seven (eight) star pharmacist. Caregiver, communicator, teacher – all ring true. In my opinion, Joggie has hit the nail on the head. When we're battling to keep our heads above water, we are sometimes submerged in just trying to get things done that we forget why we are here in the first place. The patient needs our skills and expertise, but we need to share them in a way that reassures the patient that we are acting in his or her best interest.

Strangely enough, we’re back to synchronicity. Two days before I sat down to write this column (letter to you), I attended the launch of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). The keynote speaker was President Jacob Zuma. Obviously, he had a prepared speech, but the part that spoke to me as a healthcare professional was when he deviated from the prepared words. He spoke from the heart when he said that a patient who is touched by a healthcare professional should immediately feel better. His thoughts on communication with patients were completely congruent with what Joggie has said, and what we all know should be the norm and not the exception.

In case you’re interested, it’s an expensive exercise to start or to run a university. Government allocated R 210 million to support the establishment of the university, and R 298 million was allocated in the form of a university subsidy to support its operations. Is that enough? If you read last month’s SAPJ, you’ll see that we mentioned that in 2013/2014, the state paid about R 500 million rand to settle medical negligence cases. The current contingency liability is R 24 billion. So, I ask again, is R 500 million enough? Would channelling extra money into education of health care professionals or even into human resources in healthcare not be useful in creating a workforce that may be able to reduce the contingency liability?

Celebrations all round

The focus of the day at SMU was the University. Although the University has been established on the Medunsa campus of the University of Limpopo, it really is a new University. The academic programmes offered by Medunsa will continue to be offered, but the intention is to offer education and training in a number of allied health professions and sciences. The SAPJ will definitely share news of the pharmacy school with you soon.

An unexpected celebration was the birthday of the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande. In the photograph, you
can see the Deputy Minister, Mduduzi Manana urging everyone to sing Happy Birthday while the Minister cuts his rather large birthday cake. In the distance on the right hand side of the Minister, you may see someone familiar – Qedani Mahlangu, the Gauteng MEC for Health.

Perhaps it was appropriate to have a birthday cake. After all, this was the day that the new University was “born”, and I’d like to wish it many happy returns of the day!

Lorraine Osman

Erratum: SAfr Pharm J 2015 Vol 82 No 3

The publishing team of the South African Pharmaceutical Journal would like to apologise to our readers for placing the uncorrected version of the article titled:

A review of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs authored by Natalie Schellack, Gustav Schellack and Johani Fourie. The corrected version has been uploaded on the journal’s website: www.sapj.co.za.

The publisher would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused.