Colleagues and friends: 2015 has been an eventful year with a lot of opportunities coming our way.

SAAHIP Conference 2015 was once again a huge success, both in terms of academic programme and social programme, creating learning and networking opportunities for all who were fortunate enough to attend.

At the National PSSA level, emphasis is placed by the President of PSSA (Prof Sarel Malan) on unity within the profession and at the first PSSA Exco meeting and when asked to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each sector, it became clear that sectors do not communicate clearly what they are involved with!!

Prof Malan also called on the sectoral presidents to be more involved with the other sectors. In light of this I was invited to and attended SAAPI and Academy Conferences and both AGMs. Likewise, SAAHIP has invited the Presidents of PSSA, SAAPI, Academy and SAACP to attend the SAAHIP Conference 2016. After all, we are one profession and need to speak as a unified profession!

Time and effort is also put into drawing the smaller splinter groups of the profession back into our folds, but do understand that it is a very difficult and delicate task!!!

SAAHIP has always been involved with the clinical aspects of daily pharmacy practice, as can be seen by the presentations done at previous conferences. In fact, presentations on clinical work made up a large proportion of podium and poster presentations. We will continue to put emphasis on the clinical aspects of daily pharmacy practice, to stimulate members to think about their involvement in clinical work and to help them realise that we do have the skills-base, but maybe not always the confidence to do so!

SAAHIP with other sectors and permanent staff of PSSA were involved in a workshop with the National Department of Health (NDoH), its Workforce Management directorate, the SA Pharmacy Council (SAPC) and other role players regarding the placement of community service pharmacists, yet it seems as if some problems are once again popping their heads out. Please be assured that SAAHIP is closely cooperating with all involved to find solutions to the problems we are faced with.

SAAHIP, via PSSA has offered its support and structure to Government, to set up a pharmaceutical service discussion group and our efforts with this is on-going. In the meantime SAAHIP, SAAPI and PSSA members attended a Stakeholder Consultation Meeting to discuss medicine stock, and will continue to be involved with any efforts to enhance pharmaceutical service delivery to the people of South Africa.

I have, on behalf of SAAHIP attended the first three, of a number of stake-holder meetings with Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO), SAPC, NDoH, academic institutions and other stakeholders, to draft the Qualification Modules for the Pharmacy Technician in the QCTO format. This is done in terms of the Skills Development Act of 1989 and will create the mid-level worker corps in pharmacy, required to support the pharmacist. I need to emphasise: They cannot replace the pharmacist or threaten the pharmacist’s scope of practice!!!

Members often ask what SAAHIP and the PSSA have to offer them. There is no short answer to this question, as the range of benefits is too wide to mention all, but if I should highlight a single aspect, it would be that we offer the individual pharmacist a VOICE.

The voice of the pharmacist is heard at many different levels of government, at provincial government, at national government, at the Medicines Control Council and SAPC, and also at committees such as the EDL Committee. Whilst individual members may not be aware of it, at any given time comment on legislation is heard, comment on practice guidelines is heard and comment on curricula, on workload and work environment is heard. But to ensure that we actually have impact and to be taken seriously, we need to speak as a unified profession, notwithstanding the different sectors and different interest groups within the profession. This is my plea to all! Help us to bring all members of the profession into the folds of the PSSA to ensure a vibrant future for our profession.