There is a perception that SAAHIP is mostly about conferences and for some people it might well be true! Nobody will dispute that Conference is the highlight of the SAAHIP calendar, though.

Yet, if we look at what was presented at SAAHIP Conference 2016, by members, on work done in their daily work environment, I feel so proud. As a profession we share our experiences and successes without holding back. We are also willing to present the findings of investigations with warts and all, so that other colleagues can learn from our successes and mistakes. It is very uncomfortable to have the shortcomings of your systems and practices exposed before an audience, yet it is quite enlightening to others, when you reveal how the shortcomings were addressed!

The alternative would be to hide all shortcomings and to pretend that there are none, (and don’t we all do it at times?) yet the results can be more humiliating when the cracks appear and the dam wall finally breaks.

There were numerous presentations and posters that have direct bearing on what we are trying to accomplish and if we do not want to redesign the wheel, it really helps a lot to look at information and experiences our colleagues have to share. I was amazed at the quality of research done by our own members in a limited resourced environment and want to congratulate all presenters on excellent work done throughout the 30 years of conferences. Remember, the task is not completed unless it is recorded and published (of course in the SAPJ), so that it can be utilised by future researchers.

Part of our challenge is to implement what we learnt at conference whilst it is fresh in our minds. We all return to our workstations with the best of intentions and quite often we fall back into the run of things, trying to catch up on lost days and doing general crisis management and then, months later you realise that you have actually not done any of the intended interventions!

From experience I can say that it does help to reflect on what was seen at conference and then prioritise the interventions that would have the greatest impact on our services. It helps us to keep our eye on the goal.

There is a long-standing tradition at SAAHIP Conference, that we work hard and we play hard, and this year we were not disappointed by the participation of members, observers and trade. What completely bowled me over was that, when on the return trip our bus had a flat tyre, the pharmacists jumped in and helped the poor driver! And not just anyone, we had three branch/sub-branch chairs and a past president, together with delegates helping to sort out a problem. I have not seen anything of the sort anywhere else! It made me realise what the calibre of person it is we are working with and it made me even more proud to be amongst pharmacists!

If the leadership of pharmacy does not mind to actively jump in and physically get down and dirty to resolve issues, I can honestly say that whatever the future may bring, we will be up to the challenge!