Where do the outcasts cry?

*Our hearts of stone become hearts of flesh when we learn where the outcast weeps* – Brennan Manning

Sandra van Dyk, Chairperson: APSSA

Do we know who the outcasts are? How do we recognise them? Are they walking amongst us? Yes, we know the outcasts and they are walking amongst us. Some are easily recognisable. You find them at the traffic lights with placards hanging from their necks, proclaiming not to have work, having to feed a family and being in need of funds or food. It is the little boy with the glue, trying to sniff away the reality of his life. It is the car guard with the skin burnt to leather by the sun. It is the blind person being abused by a “caregiver” who uses them as an object to beg for money.

In pharmacy, we serve the outcasts, although they are sometimes less easily recognisable. It is the grandmother sitting in a queue at the Primary Health Clinic concerned for her grandchild. It is the person who cannot get to the Primary Health Clinic during the day and visits a community pharmacy after hours with little to no funds. It is the person who cannot afford a taxi to the nearest Health Facility. It is the person who cannot properly explain their condition, who uses terms that have little or no relevance to signs and symptoms of disease. The frail who need to be represented by a caregiver.

It is certain that we know the outcasts, but do we know where they weep? I would argue that we do. In my experience, pharmacists treat everybody with respect and dignity. I have seen a pharmacist sharing her lunch with a person who has been waiting in the queue at the Hospital Pharmacy. I have seen a pharmacist treating a child who was running an extremely high fever at no cost to the caregiver. I know of pharmacists who serve by giving up precious family time to assist with education campaigns and diagnostic screening in the community.

Pharmacists have hearts of flesh. They look for the person who nobody accepts and treat them with love and dignity. We will cry with the outcasts.

The call from My Chemical Romance has definitely been answered by pharmacists.

“When I was a young boy,
My father took me into the city
To see a marching band.
He said, “Son when you grow up,
Would you be the saviour of the broken,
The beaten and the damned?”

He said “Will you defeat them,
Your demons, and all the non-believers,
The plans that they have made?”

“Because one day I’ll leave you,
A phantom to lead you in the summer,
To join The Black Parade.”

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