

# Lest we forget

Hi Lorraine

On reading the obituaries in a copy of the unconfirmed minutes of SAAHIP's 60<sup>th</sup> AGM it was with regret that I learned that a colleague, Mike Timms, had passed away. I have no idea of the circumstances or the date of his passing, but I cannot allow his contribution to hospital pharmacy in South Africa pass away with him.

Mike Timms, who was a member of the Natal Coastal Branch of the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists (SAAHIP), was among the stalwarts of the pharmacy profession during the seventies and the eighties. I first met Mike back in the mid 1970s when I became a member of the Natal Branch of SAAHIP.

To put his contribution into perspective, let me point out that in the early seventies hospital pharmacy was still the poor cousin in pharmacy. The South African Association of Institutional Pharmacists had been formed in 1957 and its name was changed to the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists in 1977. So it fell to the members of this body of hospital pharmacists to work hard at setting standards and achieving status within the government health services. One of the tasks was setting standards. All hospital pharmacists are familiar with the publication entitled Good Pharmacy Practice, so it may come as a surprise to many of them that the document started off as the brainchild of a group of pharmacists in Durban in the early seventies, and Mike Timms played a prominent role in that process. But more about that later.

Every hospital pharmacist has also come across **FORUM**, the mouthpiece of SAAHIP. Mike Timms once again in the early 1970s, took on the task of producing a branch newsletter, to be named FORUM. As the Branch Chairman, Roy Shooter, explained on the opening page: "While a newsletter is a one-way flow of information, we see FORUM as expressing the views, ideas, and positive criticism, of Members, including those country Members who are unable to attend meetings." It was such a success, with Mike as the editor, that when the organization became SAAHIP, FORUM was eventually distributed to all the branches, with branches submitting their branch news.

For eighteen months I worked at Addington Hospital with Mike, who was Chief Pharmacist, and he proved to be an exacting supervisor. When I left on transfer to Head Office, he gave me two references, one official and one unofficial. The latter handwritten one I still have, and in it he thanked me for helping solve one particular problem, and ended with the comment that..."you should have been an auditor, and I mean that as a compliment".

But I will forever associate Mike with minimum standards. He chaired the sub-committee that worked on the project. Here follows, in his own words, the facts as published in one of the early issues of FORUM:

## THE GUIDE TO MINIMUM STANDARDS

*Some months ago, State hospital pharmacists received a "Guide to Minimum Standards in Hospitals". More recently, all N.P.A. pharmacists received it too. No doubt, if they have not already done so, all other provincial pharmacists will receive it.*

*For those who ask what the Association does for hospital pharmacists, this Guide is one good example. It all started some 4 years ago in the Natal Branch, when we felt that Hospital Pharmacy needed some form of guide to at least the minimum standards to which all hospitals should conform. It would give coherence to the direction in which we are all trying to move, it would add muscle to the arm of the more progressive pharmacists, who would be able to refer to it in motivation for equipment, reference books, etc., and it would be a yardstick against which progress could be measured. The idea was put to a branch meeting, was well received, and a sub-committee was formed to look into it and prepare a standard. We were very fortunate in that the American Society of Hospital Pharmacists had already done this, and produced an excellent standard which could hardly be improved upon. All that remained to be done was to carefully adapt it to meet local needs and submit the draft to members for comment and amendment, and in due course the Natal Branch submitted the final draft to the Exco for action.*

*After liaison with the Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee, (the coordinating body for the State, the Provinces, the Armed Forces and the S.A.R.) the Guide was finally accepted in its present form.*

*It has been slightly diluted from the original, for instance, it is a Guide, whereas we had hoped for a Standard, which would have been more forceful. Nevertheless it is a useful tool, and an index against which performance can be measured.*

*Have a good look at your copy. How does your hospital measure up to it? What is your senior staff doing about it? Or, if you are the senior person, what are you doing about it? These implications will hardly have escaped the notice of the various Pharmaceutical Inspectorates, and it is very significant that the Guide, which, strictly speaking, is for pharmacists in charge of hospital pharmacies, has, in the N.P.A. at least, gone out to all pharmacists. We express the hope here that all new pharmacists joining the hospital service in future will receive a copy as a matter of course.*

Regards

**Susan Buekes**