



A message from the Executive Director of the PSSA

Ivan Kotzé

Annual report

At the recent conference, the PSSA's annual report was tabled. This is available on request from the branch chairpersons and offices of the PSSA.

The objective of an annual report is to reflect on the activities of the organisation over the previous period. Information on the performance of the PSSA can be found in this report.



Ivan Kotzé

The report reflected a positive trend both in terms of membership as well as financial prudence and my sincere appreciation to our team - the staff at the national, branch and sector offices as well as the National Executive Committee members who dedicate their private time to serve our members.

Change at the national office

I want to use this forum also to say thank you, Lorraine Osman, for being my right hand over the last 23 years. Lorraine's employment contract will come to an end in September but her expertise remains on tap and we will come to an arrangement that will benefit both parties.

Changes at the Southern Gauteng branch of the PSSA

At the Southern Gauteng branch of the PSSA, we also saw some changes, with Doug Gordon stepping down as Branch General Manager after serving in that capacity for 17 years. To you Doug, thank you for all the years of assisting us in our common goal, to serve the profession. We welcome Dr Judy Coates, who has been appointed as successor to Doug, to our team and I am very optimistic that not only the branch but the Society nationally will benefit from her appointment. Neville Lyne, who has been assisting

the Branch since his retirement at the PSSA National Office has also scaled down his involvement and for serving the profession for many years, a big thank you. Alan Carter, who was the branch Administration Manager, also retired at the end of May and I wish him all the best in pursuing fishing ventures and bush visits, which he is planning to do.



Doug Gordon

The way forward for the PSSA

Some very interesting opportunities have arisen in recent months and, without any detailed information at this stage, I am optimistic that these matters could benefit the delivery of pharmaceutical services in a more equal and competitive environment.

The first was the Minister of Health's announcement that one of the objectives of the Medical Schemes amendment Bill is to introduce uniform tariffs for services and to prohibit co-payments which in effect should do away with the appointment of DSPs. The present system wherein medical schemes negotiate their own rates with service providers, that results in members of the scheme having to face various degrees of co-payments depending on which medical-schemes option they have chosen, was said to not be in the public's interest.

The second point is the recent ruling by the Competition Appeal Court which brought clarity to the law on predatory pricing in South Africa. This must be further investigated to see if there could be any opportunity for the profession exposed to commercial challenges.

Our focus will be to enhance our membership benefits. Webinars have recently been introduced in order to communicate with our members on important topics. We will develop this further in serving our members.

Urgent submission to the VAT review panel

The Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA) has made a submission to the recently appointed panel of experts which is to review the current list of Value Added Tax (VAT) zero-rated items.

The mandate of the panel is to “consider the most effective way to mitigate the impact of the increase in the VAT rate on poor and low-income households”. Whether poor and low-income households primarily obtain their medicine from the public or private sector, the fact that medicines are VAT-rated, has an impact.

For many years, the PSSA has supported the concept that essential services and products should be exempt from VAT in order to make them more accessible to consumers. This includes medicines which are essential to maintain healthy productive citizens in this country.

The National Department of Health’s Essential Medicines Programme recognises the medicines that are not only essential for healthcare but are also closely aligned to the burden of disease in this country. While they may be given free of charge to patients who rely on public sector healthcare facilities, it must be noted that there are many occasions when a member of the public may choose to buy these medicines from a community pharmacy, rather than forfeit a day’s wages and pay transport costs to get to a public sector facility.

“No-one wants to spend money on medicines,” says Prof Sarel Malan, President of the PSSA. “People have many competing needs

and often can barely afford to pay for medicines. By offering some relief with zero-rated medicines, improved access to medicine can be more affordable.”

Many consumers are patients in the lower income groups that would gain the greatest benefit from VAT exemption. Medicine is not a normal commodity of trade – it is a necessity in most cases – and the demand and supply characteristics do not follow classic market principles.

Even for those people who belong to a medical scheme, there are substantial amounts of “out-of-pocket” medicine expenditure, in terms of self-medication and paying for either acute or chronic medication in cash if these medicines are not listed in the scheme’s formulary.

The PSSA is of the strong view that the exemption of certain priority medicines, aimed at addressing the needs of lower-income and poor persons, and addressing the need of government as an increasing funder of healthcare as the country moves towards the NHI, should be considered, and further researched.

This, it believes, will give effect to specific constitutional imperatives and increase access to medicines for patients, as well as increasing the ability of funders (whether in the public or private sectors) to make ends meet, therefore servicing more patients up to higher levels, which increases access to healthcare for all.

THE PSSA/Alpha Pharm distance learning programme 2018

The PSSA/Alpha Pharm Distance Learning Programme continues to offer pharmacists useful, practical, up-to-date information that enables them to provide optimal pharmaceutical care to their patients.

Module 2/2018 – Menopause and hormone replacement therapy

The average life expectancy of women in the Western world is increasing, with more females living into their eighties and nineties. However, the average age at which menopause occurs (51 years in the developed world and a few years earlier elsewhere) has remained the same. This means that large numbers of women will experience more than one-third of their lives in the postmenopausal state.

Menopause is a natural and universal event in the human female lifecycle. Although menopause is not a disease state that requires medication, the symptoms can adversely impact on the quality of life of women. Especially the vasomotor symptoms (hot flushes and night sweats) can be acutely distressing and incapacitating, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can play an important role in alleviating these symptoms.

This module focuses on the menopause and HRT, with emphasis on the role of the pharmacist in providing information and advice to women going through this stage in their reproductive life.

For more information about this programme contact Gill or Glynis at Insight Medicine Information on 011 706 6939 or email: cpdalphapharm@insightmed.co.za.

The PSSA/Alpha Pharm clinical education programme 2018 for pharmacy staff

The PSSA/Alpha Pharm Pharmacy Staff Clinical Education Programme continues to offer front-shop assistants or pharmacist's assistants up-to-date information that enables them to provide optimal pharmaceutical care to their patients. All pharmacy staff need to be familiar with the use of unscheduled medicines and should be reminded of when it is necessary to refer the patient to the pharmacist.

Module 2/2018 – Menopause and hormone replacement therapy

Menopause is not a disease. It is a normal and a natural event in a woman's life. There are, however, certain symptoms that women suffer from before, during and after menopause, that may affect how they feel. It is important to know about these symptoms, since they affect the quality of life of the menopausal woman and can have a negative impact on her life and work. There are effective medicines that can be used to lessen these symptoms,

as well as lifestyle factors that can be used to help relieve some of the symptoms.

The medicines that are used for menopausal symptoms are known as "hormone replacement therapy", abbreviated as HRT. Pharmacy staff are in the ideal position to understand the signs and symptoms of menopause, and what can be done to make this phase of a woman's life more comfortable. There is no "one size fits all" when medicines for menopause or lifestyle advice for menopause is offered. Each woman needs information tailored to her individual medical situation.

This module focuses on the menopause and HRT, with emphasis on the role of front shop staff in being of assistance to women going through this stage in their reproductive life.

If you would like to participate in the 2018 PSSA/Alpha Pharm Pharmacy Staff Clinical Education Programme please contact Gill or Glynis for further information at 011 706 6939 or email: cpdalphapharm@insightmed.co.za.