



Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another (*Proverbs 27:17*)

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I have been attending some of the SAAHIP branches' Annual General Meetings and though not huge crowds in attendance, but the age mix observable is so encouraging. I happened to meet and have reminiscent conversations with some of the founding members of the Association or those who were present when SAAHIP was founded. There were also those who are Past Presidents and Past Branch chairpersons. I was inspired by the level of humility and passion they radiated in that, for a period of more than 40 years, they are still active members at branch level. I am specifically mentioning humility because most of the branch chairpersons are very young and they lead differently from the way it was done before.

Most past chairpersons do not stay on and support the branches. Some are never mentioned again when their tenure ends. Some were thrown a farewell party but never invited (Ouch!). Some do not stay on because they do not feel quite comfortable with the millennial style of leadership, as they would be regularly interjecting and reminding the younger generation that "in my time, we used to..." just to emphasise or maintain status quo as it was in the 70s or 80s. However, there are those who continue to make positive contributions and impacts at the branches' meetings, participate in the activities, play mentorship roles and provide guidance to the young chairpersons.

The humility I experienced from the older generation of pharmacists reminded me of a citation I once came across some time ago. It was about a passage in the Talmud (a book of Jewish law) which relates to the story of a rabbi passing through a field, noticing an old man planting an acorn. The rabbi asks the man "Why are you planting that acorn? You surely do not expect to live long enough to see it grow into an oak tree." To which the old man—looking up briefly at the rabbi from the ground and replies, "My ancestors planted seeds so that I might enjoy the shade and the fruit of trees. I do likewise for those who come

after me." This is in a similar tone as the Greek proverb which says, "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they will never sit in". This proverb rings true across all generations. How many of us are sitting in the shade of trees and say: thanks Dave, thanks Andy, thanks Lourens, thanks Ria, thanks Ian and the many others I haven't mentioned!



Refiloe Mogale

Are we appreciative of what these people have created for us by planting seeds for the future, which is our present? Or are we nonchalant that the generations before us did not fight enough or just merely scratched the surface?

When we contemplate the longevity of the Association, it's nearly impossible to ignore the fact that each generation has faced its own challenges. Understanding the decisions made by the older generation at that time, the trials that beset them, the opportunities presented to them and learning the lessons of history, helps us to admire and mimic the right things but also helps us not to repeat the wrong things. What about us? Are we thinking about our legacy, our vision, our mission for the profession? For the Association? Are we voicing our concerns loud enough? Are we changing or contributing to the systems for the betterment of the future of pharmacy? Will the next generation of pharmacists enjoy the shade of trees we are planting today?

By showing gratitude for all that was planted before us, we have a responsibility to do right by the future generations of pharmacists and set them up for success. A responsibility to plant, to tend and to bequeath them with the trees under whose shade we will never sit.