The PSSA Perspectives is usually dedicated to what the PSSA has done/achieved over the past months for the members and the profession. In this issue, however, we want to dedicate a section to the pharmacy profession as a whole.

Pharmacy’s response to the recent unrests and looting

The whole country watched in shock and disbelief when we saw the looting in July, especially KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces. When the pictures and videos of pharmacies that had been completely destroyed started appearing, many of us cried with the pharmacy owners and staff about the tremendous losses. According to our knowledge, it is the first time in South Africa that pharmacies have been targeted, looted and destroyed to this extent.

Data shows that about 145 pharmacies, including pharmaceutical warehouses, were looted or destroyed during these unrests. The destruction and looting were predominantly in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, with one independently owned community pharmacy in the Mpumalanga province.

While this was a sorrowful time for our country and our profession, it was amazing to see how the profession came together to assist the affected pharmacies. The SAPC put out a media statement condemning the looting and destruction and cautioning members of the public to ensure that they only obtain medication from legitimate health establishments and not to buy any medication from the looters. The following day the SAPC also requested all Responsible Pharmacists and pharmacy owners to report to the SAPC if their pharmacy had been looted and/or damaged with guidelines of what should be stated in the statement to the police for completeness. This was to assist in future inspections and identify pharmacies that would need to relocate and might need to be set up in temporary locations. The SAPC communicated about the training of pharmacist interns and learners impacted by the unrests and will process any changes in terms of tutor or facility free of charge. Relocations and temporary relocations will also be processed free of charge by the SAPC.

SAHPRA, the SAPC and other Health Professions Councils also put out a media statement asking the public to return any looted medication to health establishments to ensure the proper disposal of these medicines as their safety cannot be guaranteed. The PSSA also requested the Department of Health to facilitate the return of looted medicines as these were a health hazard in the hands of laypersons.

A special thank you to ICPA for their work for the pharmacies that were affected. With Business for South Africa’s (B4SA) support, they established a relief fund to assist especially independent pharmacies that do not have the same resources as the corporate groups to rebuild their businesses.

But the biggest heroes of this story are all the pharmacists who had to sneak into pharmacies to assist patients, who phoned around and asked on social media for stock and assistance from other pharmacies with medication for patients, and to the pharmacists who responded to those pleas to help the patients. To the pharmacists from the warehouses who made plans to get critical stock to dialysis patients. The staff at hospitals who slept on boardroom floors and worked shift after shift without being able to go home and check on their families. The community members who helped each other with food and baby formula and other necessities and protected their communities against the looters. South Africa, but especially the pharmacy profession, showed that we could come together to overcome obstacles and in the spirit of ubuntu.

Non-pharmacy related challenges pharmacists face

The PSSA was made aware of a pharmacy that two senior Environmental Health Practitioners inspected from the relevant municipality. After the inspection, the pharmacy owner received a notice stating that they are handling foodstuff for sale to the public without being in possession of a Valid Certificate of Acceptability instructing them that they should cease trading immediately until such a time that they comply with the relevant legislation. This certificate is issued under the Regulations Governing General Hygiene Requirements for Food Premises and Transport of Food and relates to the sale of perishable products or meals for consumption and is required for places where food is prepared and sold. The pharmacy in question only sold pre-packed and sealed potato chips (crisps) from Simba or Lays and the likes. This certainly does not require a Certificate of Acceptability.

In the second incident, a pharmacy owner contacted the PSSA after an inspection by the Department of Employment and Labour (DOEL) as there were certain requirements not in place. The pharmacy owner was very stressed as a long list of items in the document required attention. Studying the document, however, he only had to respond to the items marked. This was pointed out to him by the PSSA. The PSSA also forwarded to him some documents to assist him in complying with the applicable requirements related to COVID-19 protocols.
If pharmacy owners are faced with such communication, they should not panic but should read the letters carefully and, if in doubt, contact the PSSA to assist them where possible with their responses.

Changes to professional indemnity insurance

Recently the PSSA announced a change to the preferred provider of professional indemnity coverage to PSSA members. PPS has been involved for many years and the introduction of PPS Health Professions Indemnity provided an opportunity to rethink how indemnity protection is delivered to our members. The strategic objective of the PPS business is to provide health professionals with quality comprehensive cover delivered through service excellence in a sustainable manner. The PSSA and the PPS Group have significant overlap in membership and we are excited to bring you the enhanced product offering.

With effect from 1 July 2021, all professional indemnity insurance renewals and new business applications for pharmacists and BPharm students are processed on the new product, which is underwritten and administered by PPS Health Professions Indemnity. This has allowed us to improve the insurance cover provided by the product with minimal impact on the cost of insurance. The PSSA continues to play an important role in the delivery of the product and works hand-in-hand with the PPS Health Professions Indemnity team. To date, we have received positive feedback from those members who have gone through the revised processes with annual inception dates in July and August.

Insurance cover is now provided on an independent basis, meaning that each member has the contracted cover limits available to them irrespective of the performance of the PSSA portfolio as a whole. At the same time, the cover limits have been increased to consistent levels designated for the various risk categories. It is the responsibility of PPS Health Professions Indemnity in consultation with PSSA management to constantly review the limits to ensure our members are removed as far as possible from the liability risk. Best of all, the product qualifies for allocation to existing PPS Profit-Share Accounts and also provides a benefit under the PPS Cross-Holdings Booster initiative. For many of our members, this can result in effectively paying nothing for their indemnity cover.

Watch this space for further exciting enhancements to the

The PSSA/Alpha Pharm distance learning programme 2021

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 3 – Hormonal contraception

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the use of contraception advances the human right of people to determine the number and spacing of their children. Of the 1.9 billion women in the reproductive age group (15 to 49 years) worldwide in 2019, 1.1 billion had a need for family planning; of these, 842 million were using contraceptive methods.

No contraceptive method is perfect. The advantages and disadvantages, and benefits and risks, of the different options must be evaluated, and then a decision must be made on which method will be the most appropriate for a specific woman. It is an individualised decision.

This module will enable you to have a broad understanding of all the types of hormonal contraceptives, how they work, their indications, contra-indications, potential side effects, how to counsel patients on their use and provide appropriate advice. It also covers the types and reasons for emergency contraceptive use, the ethical responsibilities of the pharmacist in providing such contraception and how to counsel patients requesting emergency contraception.

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 2021 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 3 – Female contraception

Effective contraception is the only way of preventing an unplanned pregnancy if a couple is planning on having sex (intercourse).

This module will enable the pharmacy front shop assistant to learn about the female reproductive system, menstrual cycle and when in the cycle ovulation and fertilisation are likely to occur and be able to dispel myths about sex and contraception. It covers the types of oral contraceptive pills as well as the other (non-oral) contraceptive methods for females and how they are used. The importance of using contraceptive methods correctly and regularly is discussed as well as how the emergency contraceptive works.

It is the responsibility of healthcare professionals to ensure that couples have access to effective contraception and reliable contraceptive advice, so that unplanned pregnancies, as well as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), can be reduced or avoided. The pharmacy front shop assistant is well-placed to discuss the need for contraception as well as the contraceptive options that are available.

This module will focus on all the methods available to women, with the focus on hormonal contraceptives.

If you would like to participate in the PSSA/Alpha Pharm pharmacy staff clinical education programme, please contact Gill or Glynis for further information on 011 706 6939 or email: cpdalphapharm@insightmed.co.za.