You are invited to participate in the 6th ICPPS which will be held in Durban at Coastlands on the Ridge, from 25–27 September 2011, under the theme: “Mind the Gap”.

The School of Pharmacy and Pharmacology, the School of Medical Sciences and the Department of Therapeutic and Medicine Management, University of KwaZulu-Natal, are pleased to host this conference. It will showcase plenary and open discussion forums, panel discussions, formal paper presentations, and workshops on a range of topics. This is the first call for abstracts for this conference.

Contributions in any area of pharmaceutical and pharmacological sciences, from basic research to applied and clinical research, are invited for either oral or poster presentation. Examples of areas of research that would be relevant include therapeutic strategies, preclinical research, drug design, formulation and regulation.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is 15 May 2011. The corresponding author will receive notification of acceptance by 30 June 2011.

Please check the website for submission details for the submission of abstracts, the Best Publication Award, the Pharmacy Teacher of the Year Award and the Community Service Award. The Conference website address is: http://www.sapharmacol.co.za/CONGRESS_Site/Default.aspx and will be available from 1 April 2011. The organising committee is looking forward to seeing you in Durban.

My point of view

To educate or to train: that is the question. What is required of young pharmacists today, especially those in South Africa? These are some of the questions that we consider when devising a new curriculum. A wise man and former chairman of the Academy once told me that it is not enough to do things right. You also have to do the right things. So, before we resolve how to do things correctly at university, we have to discern if we are doing the right things. It’s important to find a balance between education and training.

Academia is no longer the esteemed "ivory tower" of the 18th and early 19th centuries. It is no longer sufficient to provide a graduate with higher education only, without also delivering the appropriate training to enable him/her to hit the ground running. Exit-level outcomes have now been published, and we know exactly what is required of a pharmacy graduate on completion of his/her studies, both with regard to knowledge and the practical application thereof. However, the question remains whether or not we can provide the education and training necessary to produce a good pharmacist in four years.

A decade ago, Moony (2001) stated that the market’s main requirement was that graduates should be well educated in the fundamentals of the field, and trained or practised in applying these skills to real problems. It is also generally accepted that education provides the basis on which the recipient can continuously question the status quo, while training focuses on the currently accepted state of knowledge. Thus, the foundation of lifelong learning is sound education, and this is where, as universities, our main role and strength lies. We should ensure disciplinary excellence, but within multidisciplinary programmes, to produce scholars and lifelong learners capable of solving multidisciplinary problems. To do this, the pharmacy programme will have to further inculcate skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, strategic thinking, multitasking and prioritising.

For me, it is clear that our focus should be on educating the future pharmacist. With just the right amount of training to balance the programme, the end result will be a professional pharmacist; a caregiver with the ability to adapt and provide leadership in all aspects of pharmacy and pharmaceutical care.