



President's Message

My journey up to now

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PSSA President

In 2023, during the 78th AGM of the PSSA, I was elected as the President of this great Society, following in the footsteps of the first President of the Society, Mr Todd, who was elected in 1946. This marked a milestone that reflects progress for the Society for its remarkable achievements and enduring legacy. Although PSSA was given the opportunity to host the 82nd FIP Congress, I did not envisage having to do much as FIP handles all the conference arrangements. It was only when the discussions about us being the host took place that I realised what I was expected to do.

It was only during the site visit in Cape Town in March where we met up with the President of FIP, Paul Sinclair, the Congress organisers, Sophie, and Carola, that I realised that as the President of the Society there would be much to do. During this meeting, we agreed on some of the venues and artists that would be contracted for the different gatherings and any project that we as PSSA can undertake.

I, Ms Refiloe Mogale (PSSA's Executive Director) and Dr Mariet Eksteen (PSSA Professional Development Officer) were given the opportunity to put forward our ideas for the various conference activities. After my re-election as the President of PSSA, it really sank in what was expected of me to participate in at the FIP congress.

Before the FIP congress, I met with the PSSA head office to discuss the last arrangements and to coordinate which sessions each of us would be attending. I also attended the special AGM of Border and Eastern Districts (B&E) branch on 28 August in East London before flying to Cape Town on 30 August. The AGM started with a webinar on vaccine hesitancy presented by Prof Truter. It provided valuable insights into the factors behind vaccine hesitancy and strategies for improving vaccine acceptance. After the webinar, we shared takeaway messages from the PSSA with the attendees, sparking productive discussions with the members on how the branch can support PSSA in achieving its mission.

The engagement with the B&E Branch members was both refreshing and encouraging. I could see the enthusiasm on their faces and their willingness to serve the profession through the Society. All were very excited about the FIP congress. I would like to thank the Branch Chairperson, Taki Kyriacos, for inviting us.

On the Friday evening before the start of the Congress, I attended the Opening dinner hosted by the FIP President and most of the dignitaries from other countries were also there. It was very encouraging to receive feedback from our international guests in the way they described the beauty, splendour, friendly reception in

South Africa. The evening was indeed fun, joyous and memorable for all in attendance. Then on Sunday before the Opening Ceremony, we met with the Director-General of Health, Dr Sandile Buthelezi who was pleased with our presentation and enquired about the role of pharmacy support personnel and our stance as PSSA regarding the ownership of pharmacies. I cannot wait to see the yield of our future engagements with him.

I was motivated when I saw the large number of enthusiastic pharmacists attending the Congress. It gave me the courage to face all the colleagues from around the world and to welcome them to our country. I am grateful to Nitsa at the National Office, who served as my chaperone, as there were many sessions where my presence was required. The seamless coordination of my calendar was excellent.

On Monday, we met with the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi. It was an honour for me to meet him and it was such big moment for the PSSA and FIP to have the presence of the Minister at our Congress. I took the opportunity to mention the PSSA to him in the hope that should we request a meeting with him, he will remember that we had met in Cape Town. We are grateful for the NDoH's communication team for ensuring that the Congress was broadcasted on their platforms. Engaging with other FIP Member organisations was very fruitful and I'm hopeful that we can learn from each other. The sessions were of a high standard and those who attended couldn't stop talking about what they had heard.

When the Congress ended, I wanted it to continue, but that was not possible as I had other commitments, such as the Southern Gauteng Symposium held on 28 September. The symposium was a great platform for pharmacists to showcase their contributions to the profession. I hope other PSSA branches will try and emulate this event so that we can identify and promote the pockets of excellence in all our branches.

As the PSSA, we successfully hosted the first-ever Congress in sub-Saharan Africa and the second largest Congress in FIP's history. Many delegates told us that we are friendly people, and we should take pride in this. Future congresses will have to compete with us regarding the number of delegates, friendliness, warmth, etc. We have set the bar, not only for South Africa but for the African continent. I feel very proud to be the PSSA President. Thank you to my colleagues for their support. One PSSA, One Pharmacy.

Yours in Pharmacy.