



President's Message

Personal views on the Pharmacy Profession

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PSSA President

I was given the opportunity to present on the practice of pharmacy in the previously disadvantaged areas during the 60th Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA) Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on the 21st to the 24th of May 2005 at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The topic was exploring our past and determining our future. I gave a detailed description of my experience with the general council; on how I practiced in an area where the average income was plus minus a thousand rand per month, as some households were run by grandparents. It was my own decision to open up a pharmacy practice in this area to provide pharmaceutical services to this community, which was not available before.

In this impoverished community, it is not uncommon for patients to come into my pharmacy with a minimum of one hundred rand and request a pharmaceutical service. And being a passionate community pharmacist, I offer the best quality service as best as I can.

I explained to my colleagues then, the satisfaction I still feel on a regular basis when having to come to work and promote public health to this community. It brings me great pride and joy when patients come back after getting treatment and offer me positive feedback regarding their health. I become more encouraged by their positive feedback than monetary rewards.

At that same AGM, during the conclusion of the AGM, I was honored with the certificate of appreciation named *"From Dust to Diamonds"*, with the words exploring the past and furthering the future.

The National Health Insurance

The South African government is in the process of introducing the National Health Insurance (NHI) bill, which is being currently debated about at the National Council of Provinces.

Universal health coverage is the only way that we as a country can provide equal quality healthcare to all its citizens. The imbalances of the past must be addressed in some way or another because ignoring these imbalances could lead to detrimental results. As pharmacists and

most healthcare professionals we have a problem with the immediate introduction of NHI because the country is not yet in a state where this can be affordable. The funding model that would make us viable as pharmacists has not even been determined or communicated to us as healthcare professionals; this brings many questions to us as there is no clear explanation on how funding will be provided and as pharmacists how we will be reimbursed for our pharmaceutical services.

The NHI scheme in South Africa aims to provide universal healthcare coverage and improve access to healthcare services. Community pharmacies are expected to play a key role in the NHI, delivering primary care services such as chronic disease management, health education and promotion, maternal and child healthcare, and immunisation in both urban and rural areas. However, there are currently no policies specifying the roles and functions of pharmacists in the NHI or in a re-engineered Primary Health Care system. The remuneration of pharmacists is still unclear, and an increased level of clinical and experiential training may be required to take on a more integrated role. Health technology assessment (HTA) is explicitly identified in the proposed NHI legislation and will have a prominent role in informing decisions about adoption and access to health interventions and technologies.

The other major problem that we have is that our country is trying to introduce a bill that is similar to that of the United Kingdom (UK) which has been implemented for a couple of years but is currently going through challenges. And as a country we will have to take cognizance of what is happening in the UK.

As the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA), we will continue to monitor the implementation of NHI as much as we can. We will always try to engage with the National Department of Health to get a better solution towards the implementation of NHI. This solution must at all times benefit the people of South Africa in order to avoid the hinderance of the provision of pharmaceutical and all other healthcare services combined. At the same time, we will also use those engagements to influence the introduction of other health policies that might be in the pipeline to favour us and the community.

All the above can be achieved by ensuring that we as the PSSA always strive for unity, that all our sectors are united and collaborating at all professional levels. Collaboration among sectors must begin at branch level; for example, community pharmacists can start exploring the idea of public-private partnership by engaging with the hospital pharmacists. There is already a programme running in some areas where community pharmacists are supplying chronic medications, immunisations, and contraceptives.

Academic pharmacists will also have to engage with other sectors within pharmacy on how best we can improve the scope of practice of the pharmacy profession.

Pharmacists in industry will have to engage more with community and hospital pharmacists on the availability and shortages of pharmaceutical medicines.

As the host nation of the upcoming 82nd Congress of the International Federation of Pharmacists (FIP), we will be showcasing our diversity, beautiful environment and landscapes as a country and the African continent as a whole. Let us warmly welcome our international

colleagues. PSSA and all its branches, sectors and other stake holders will be in the forefront leading this course and we are more than ready to fulfil the tasks. As PSSA, we will make sure that the 2024 FIP Congress becomes a success in honouring the late President of FIP (Mr Dominique Jordaan) who was very close to us and the country. He always talks about one FIP and that will be fulfilled by us. May His soul rest in eternal peace.

As PSSA we will always forge for engagements of all sectors in different branch levels.

Lastly, as the President of PSSA I would like to thank the Executive Director, Mr Ivan Kotzé, for dedicating all his life for the advancement of all pharmacists in South Africa and the professional functioning of the PSSA office. My thanks also goes to all the other staff members of the Society.

I would like to wish all the members of the PSSA a happy festive season and prosperous new year.

For all those who will be travelling, I wish them safe journeys to their different destinations.