

President's Message



Tshifhiwa Rabali

PSSA President

The Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (PSSA) held its Unemployment Indaba during SAPHEX 2025. This milestone event was born out of the growing number of concerns raised by our colleagues regarding unemployment in the pharmacy profession—a matter we can no longer afford to ignore.

The Indaba was very well attended, with numerous pharmacists from across the sector showing genuine interest and concern. The aim was clear: to engage in an open, honest conversation with key stakeholders in order to understand the root causes of pharmacist unemployment and begin working collectively towards solutions.

We were honoured to have guests from the NDoH, SAPC, public and private hospital, community, manufacturing, academy and our young pharmacists.

Each stakeholder shared valuable insights, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities within their respective spheres. As the PSSA, we emphasised the urgent need for a coordinated, sustainable approach to tackling unemployment within our profession—starting with honest engagement and ending in action.

The presentation by the Deputy Director-General of Health was particularly insightful, as it provided a comprehensive overview of the situation. At the heart of the issue, it became clear that the primary constraint is a lack of funding. However, this may begin to shift, as the Minister of Finance announced new allocations during the budget speech on 12 March 2025. It remains to be seen whether these allocations are in response to an oversupply of pharmacists or pharmacist's assistants, a topic that has been raised in various forums.

Another important point raised during the Indaba came from the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC). It was revealed that an error had occurred in a previous briefing to the Department of Health regarding the recommended ratio of pharmacist's assistants to

pharmacists. The SAPC is currently working to correct this discrepancy, and we look forward to receiving further clarification on the matter. In line with the ongoing theme of encouraging innovation and “thinking outside the box” when it comes to employment opportunities, the Registrar of the Pharmacy Council shared a noteworthy insight: currently, there are only eight consultant pharmacists practicing in the entire country. This underrepresented area could present new and untapped opportunities for unemployed pharmacists to explore and develop further.

We also had the opportunity to hear from the Local Choice, a franchisor of independent franchisee pharmacies, who shared that they are ready to support pharmacists who aspire to own their own practices by recruiting them into their Local Choice franchise network. From my perspective, it's important that companies like these begin investing in young pharmacists, particularly by establishing pharmacies within the communities these pharmacists come from. This approach not only empowers them to serve their own communities but also gives them the opportunity to take on the role of responsible pharmacists. Furthermore, they should consider entering into shareholding negotiations, as many young pharmacists face significant challenges in accessing the starter funding needed to establish independent practices.

Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to the families and communities affected by the recent flooding disasters in KwaZulu-Natal and across the country over the past few months. A special tribute goes to the family of one of our own—a dedicated pharmacist and member of the PSSA—who tragically lost her life while crossing a bridge on her way home from work. Her passing is a heartbreaking reminder of the risks many face in their daily lives. May her soul rest in eternal peace and may all those who have suffered loss during this time find comfort and strength in the days ahead.

I thank you.