



## Reflecting on the PSSA Strategic Plan (2025–2030)

As the PSSA began this journey to develop our new strategic plan, we did not start with documents or templates. We started by observing and listening. We listened to the concerns whispered in webinars, voiced in branch meetings, and one-on-one conversations. We asked ourselves: What do our members need to thrive? What does the pharmacy profession need to evolve and lead in a changing health system? The process that led to this strategy was inclusive and introspective. It was driven by a realisation that, to be the undisputed guardian and leader of the profession, the PSSA would need to stay relevant, connected, and responsive in a changing professional and national landscape.

The strategic planning process began with a comprehensive consultation, most notably through a member survey that posed challenging yet necessary questions: What are the most critical issues in pharmacy? Where is the PSSA falling short? What should the next few years look like? We viewed the survey responses as a call to action as they revealed an organisation struggling with low visibility, internal fragmentation, regulatory pressure, and a sense of disconnection among members, including pharmacists outside the PSSA's formal membership. These issues became the foundation of a new strategic direction, which forced us to confront outdated assumptions and imagine new ways of working, thereby becoming more relevant, responsive, member-centred, and accountable.

What emerged was a strategy structured around four objectives: increasing member engagement, enhancing visibility, optimising resources, and strengthening professional advocacy. The strategy is supported by a mission that supports and promotes the profession in advancing patient care and ensuring access to medicine for all by upholding professional standards of pharmaceutical practice in all settings. It is guided by our values, which underscore our commitment to uphold professional integrity and accountability in all our actions, ensuring transparency and responsibility in everything we do. Through collaboration, we strive for excellence while advocating for the needs of those we serve, always working together to create a positive, lasting impact.

The first strategic objective aims to transform passive membership into active engagement by encouraging networking, leadership development, and inclusive communication. It embraces the diversity of the pharmacy profession across demographics and practice areas by knowingly including pharmacy support personnel and underrepresented sectors. The second strategic

objective prioritises visibility as a tool for influence, positioning the PSSA and pharmacy to shape public perception and to highlight the intrinsic contribution of the pharmacy profession in delivering effective healthcare in South Africa. Through various media, digital platforms, and strategic campaigns that elevate pharmacists' contributions to healthcare, this objective aims to strengthen advocacy, build public trust, and attract future pharmacy professionals.

The third strategic objective redefines resource optimisation by seeking to harness the underutilised potential of members, strengthen financial governance across branches, and engage external partnerships for sustainability. In doing so, we are transforming resource challenges into opportunities for collaboration and innovation. The fourth strategic objective repositions the PSSA as a proactive, credible voice in health policy through evidence-based advocacy and sustained relationships with policymakers. It emphasises that meaningful representation must be earned through consistent relevance, trust, and strategic engagement.

The strategic plan also emphasises stakeholder mapping as a crucial step and a strategy for alignment. Each stakeholder's interests were considered, and actions were proposed that aligned professional goals with national health outcomes. The mapping served as a reminder to the Society that effective advocacy and sustainable reform require more than mere internal alignment, but also a coordinated action with and through diverse stakeholders.

The PSSA 2025–2030 Strategic Plan is more than a forward-looking document; it is an indication that we are paying attention, that we are willing to adapt, and that we are committed to walking this path together. This new plan reflects our commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and professional excellence. More importantly, it reflects the voices of our members that shaped it and the needs of our members that inspired it.

Its success will depend on our willingness to continue listening, learning, and building a profession that serves patients, advances science, and uplifts every pharmacist. We hope it will be viewed as a renewed social contract between the Society and its members, as well as between the profession and the public it serves. Therefore, we invite our members not only to be recipients of this strategy but also to be co-designers of a future where pharmacy stands tall, respected, and indispensable in every corner of our healthcare system.

## The PSSA/Alpha Pharm distance learning programme 2025

*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, 2025 – Sexually transmitted infections

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), sexually transmitted infections (STIs) continue to affect millions of people worldwide. It is estimated that over 376 million men and women aged 15–49 years are infected with one of the four common STIs—chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, or trichomoniasis. This translates to an average of more than one million new infections every day worldwide.

While some STIs can also be transmitted through non-sexual routes—such as from mother to child during childbirth or through

contaminated blood—the focus of this module is specifically on STIs acquired through sexual contact. This module provides an overview of the more common STIs (chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, trichomoniasis, herpes, human papillomavirus and hepatitis B), their symptoms and treatment, with a focus on syndromic management, which is used in South African primary healthcare settings. It addresses the types of STIs, risk factors, diagnostic methods, pharmacologic management and preventative measures. It also highlights the pharmacist's role in supporting patients and promoting safe sexual practices.

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a major STI in South Africa. However, its complexity requires separate, focused coverage and is therefore not included in this module.

*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 2025 for pharmacy staff

*The PSSA/Alpha Pharm pharmacy staff clinical education programme continues to offer front-shop assistants or pharmacists' 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, 2025 – Sexually transmitted infections

A sexually transmitted infection (STI) is an infection transmitted through blood, semen, vaginal fluids, or other bodily fluids during sexual contact (oral, anal, or genital) with an infected partner.

STIs can affect anyone who is sexually active. STIs are therefore common, affecting millions of people worldwide. On average, there are more than one million new sexually transmitted infections happening every day worldwide.

South Africa has one of the highest rates of STIs (including HIV) in the world. Sexual assault further increases the rate of STIs in South Africa, as survivors are often exposed to unprotected sex and injuries that raise the chance of acquiring a sexually transmitted infection.

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a major STI in South Africa. However, it is a complex infection that requires separate, focused coverage and is therefore not included in this module.

This module provides an overview of STIs, including the more common types, how they are spread, factors that increase their spread, common symptoms, possible complications and how they are treated and can be prevented.

*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.*