



A place at the table: why SAPJ's accreditation matters for pharmacy in South Africa and Africa

There are moments in the life of a profession when the present suddenly stretches backwards into history and forward into possibility — when the labour of many years is acknowledged, and a door swings open to a new future. The recent confirmation of the *South African Pharmaceutical Journal* (SAPJ) on the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) accredited Scopus list is such a moment.

For nearly a century, since its first publication in 1931, SAPJ has chronicled the pulse of pharmacy in South Africa — its science, its policy debates, its ethical dilemmas, its evolving practice. Yet, recognition on the DHET list gives this century-old voice not only legitimacy in local scholarship but also visibility in the global conversation.

Like a baobab tree whose roots run deep and wide, SAPJ stands not alone but because of all who have tended, watered, and protected it over generations. Its strength is the community's strength, and this recognition is a fruit borne of many hands and hearts. In the spirit of Ubuntu, the journal flourishes because our profession has flourished—each article, each review, a testament that “*a person is a person because of other people*”.

Why this accreditation matters?

Inclusion on the DHET list means that peer-reviewed articles published in the SAPJ now “count” in academic terms: universities can claim research subsidies for contributions here. This has immediate and very concrete implications:

- **For pharmacists and other scientists in academia**, it offers a trusted, local platform to publish work that is recognised by South Africa's higher education funding system, easing the tension between publishing abroad for subsidy and publishing at home for relevance.
- **Practicing pharmacists outside academia**: Accreditation means that real-world innovations, case reports, and practice-based insights from pharmacists in hospitals, clinics, and community pharmacies can now be published and acknowledged. Your work—improving patient care, managing medicines, optimising workflows—can now shape the international, national and regional understanding of pharmacy practice, not just remaining informal knowledge at your workplace. Elevating the possibility of practice-led research and innovation being disseminated through a formally accredited channel, ensuring that community pharmacy, industry-driven discoveries, and clinical interventions are not overlooked.

In short, SAPJ's accreditation dismantles the old divide between scholarship and practice. Where once our pharmacists felt like outliers to the broader academic system, we now have not just a seat at the table but a platform shaped by us — rooted in Africa, speaking to the world.

This recognition also carries a symbolic weight beyond our borders. Africa has historically been underrepresented in global pharmaceutical publishing. The continent's problems and solutions are often studied elsewhere, written about elsewhere, published elsewhere.

Like a pharmacist carefully measuring and compounding, this editorial achievement reminds us of the alchemy between rigour and relevance. We are not merely importing knowledge but producing it; not simply imitating global science but shaping it.

Where SAPJ fits in the continental landscape

Here, the broader picture deserves attention. Currently, recognised and accredited pharmacy-related journals in South Africa and Africa are rare.

In South Africa, the SAPJ is now accredited by DHET (through the Scopus list). There have historically been few other pharmacy discipline-specific accredited journals. Outside of SAPJ, much South African pharmacy research has been pushed into broader medical journals or international outlets. In Africa as a whole, accredited and indexed pharmacy journals are limited. Examples include the *African Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology* (Nigeria, widely indexed), the *East and Central African Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences* (Kenya/Uganda), and the *Journal of Pharmaceutical Policy and Practice* (though international, it hosts significant African scholarship). However, very few of these carry DHET recognition within South Africa's subsidy system.

What this means is that SAPJ is carrying a disproportionate responsibility and opportunity — it is the primary accredited, local journal fully dedicated to pharmacy in South Africa, and one of only a handful across the continent that blends discipline specificity, accreditation, and continental identity.

The metaphor of compounding

Pharmacy is, in its essence, the art of compounding: taking disparate ingredients and producing something unified, effective, and life-giving. This accreditation is much the same. It required years of

investment from the societal (PSSA), editorial (SAPJ), and publishing house (Medpharm) leadership, an editorial board representing South Africa's leading universities, and the consistent scholarly contributions of pharmacists in every field. It was not the achievement of one person, but of an entire profession working slowly, deliberately, like careful compounding — validating the old truth that the best remedies arise not from haste, but from craft.

Yet accreditation is not the end of the story. It is, in fact, only the license to begin a new chapter. With visibility comes responsibility:

- To ensure that SAPJ remains rigorous in peer review, uncompromising in ethics, and fastidious in quality.
- To invite the private sector pharmacist, the hospital pharmacist, the community-based practitioner into these pages as much as the academic scientist.
- To make room for the contested questions — around policy, equity, cost, accessibility — the issues that define pharmacy in the African context.

Like the pharmacist on a midnight shift, SAPJ must remain vigilant: steady hands, clear eyes, and a deep awareness that what it dispenses is not just knowledge but trust.

This accreditation is more than a bureaucratic milestone. It is a profession saying to itself — and to the world — *“we are here, we have something to say, and our scholarship is worthy”*. For the next generation of pharmacists, it means they can train their academic voice at home, with confidence that their work will resonate both locally and globally.

For South Africa and Africa, it means the pharmacist finally has a journal that not only serves the profession but also serves the academic ecosystem — binding together practice, science, and policy in our own context.

Sometimes, achievements are loud — trumpeted and celebrated. Sometimes, they are quiet, like a carefully prepared dose that will, over time, change the course of health. The accreditation of SAPJ is both: a shout of recognition, and a quiet assurance that pharmacy in South-Africa is stepping into its rightful place in the global literature of medicine.

Warm wishes

Natalie Schellack