



## Celebrating the success of the 2025 APSSA Conference: Converging skills from molecule to patient care

**Prof Michelle Viljoen** (Conference convener) and **Prof Sarel Malan** (Director School of Pharmacy, University of the Western Cape)

The Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa (APSSA) hosted its annual scientific conference from 31 August to 2 September 2025 at the Lagoon Beach Hotel, Milnerton, Cape Town. The theme, “*Converging Skills: From Molecule to Patient Care*”, captured the spirit of collaboration that defines modern pharmaceutical sciences that spans from cutting-edge laboratory research and patient-centred clinical practice.

This prestigious event brought together academic leaders, researchers, pharmacy students, and healthcare professionals from South Africa and beyond to discuss innovations, research, and best practices in the pharmaceutical sciences.

### A setting that inspired innovation and collaboration

The Lagoon Beach Hotel offered an idyllic venue for the event, with breath-taking views of Table Mountain and the Atlantic Ocean forming a stunning backdrop for scientific exchange. The warm, collegial atmosphere was evident from the very start. The delegates that gathered to engage in three days of stimulating discussions and knowledge sharing were a dynamic and diverse mix.

With 150 delegates representing all nine Schools of Pharmacy in South Africa, as well as international guests and exhibitors, the conference truly reflected the national and global reach of this conference. The strong presence of postgraduate students once again highlighted APSSA's ongoing commitment to nurturing and showcasing emerging scientific talent.

### Welcome event full of energy

The conference opened on a vibrant note with a captivating performance by Marimba Jam, a talented all-female marimba ensemble from Cape Town. Their rhythmic energy and uplifting music set the perfect tone for the days that followed and created an atmosphere of inspiration, connection, and celebration of shared purpose. Professor David Holgate, the Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Prof Sarel Malan, Director of the School of Pharmacy, warmly welcomed the delegates, guests and exhibitors.

### Rich and diverse scientific programme

The scientific programme ran across two full days, commencing each morning with thought-provoking keynote addresses from leaders in the field, followed by parallel oral sessions showcasing diverse topics within pharmaceutical sciences, clinical pharmacy, pharmacy practice and pharmacy education.

Day one featured the ever-popular Young Scientist Competition, which drew 29 entries from postgraduate students presenting innovative research in pharmaceutics, pharmaceutical chemistry, pharmacology, clinical pharmacy and pharmacy practice. The depth and quality of the student presentations reaffirmed the vitality of pharmaceutical research in South Africa.

The 46th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Academy took place on Monday evening, 1 September 2025, where honorary memberships were awarded to Ms Nitsa Manolis and Dr Gareth Kilian in recognition of their long-standing dedication and service to APSSA.

Keynote and Invited Speakers: Enriching Minds and Inspiring Futures

The APSSA conference was honoured to host the following distinguished keynote speakers whose insights added immense value to the scientific programme: Prof Jacques Joubert (UWC); Prof Lauren Jonkman (University of Namibia); Prof Natalie Schellack (University of Pretoria) and Prof Paulo Rosa (University of Campinas, Brazil). Their presentations covered a spectrum of pharmaceutical innovations, from artificial intelligence in novel drug design to the evolving role of pharmacists in patient care and pharmacy education.

In addition, the esteemed invited speakers were: Dr Mariam Parker (UWC), Prof Clemence Tarirai (Tshwane University of Technology), Prof Clinton Veale (University of Cape Town), and Prof Vicente Rodilla (University CEU Cardenal Herrera, Spain). They captivated the audience with their depth of expertise and global perspectives, inspiring delegates to think beyond traditional boundaries.

### Scientific closing highlights: Art, Science and Reflection

The final session captured the diversity and interdisciplinary nature of pharmacy. Prof Vicente Rodilla's presentation, “*The Painted Pharmacy: Medicines, Drugs and Poisons on Canvas*,” was a fascinating exploration

of the depiction of pharmacy and medicine in classical art, merging science with culture and creativity. Prof Rod Walker, a respected figure in South African pharmacy education, offered a thought-provoking talk on "Agenda 2063: Implications for the Pharmacy Curriculum", sparking lively discussion on the future of pharmacy education in South Africa. Last but not least, Dr Rajesh Vagiri addressed an issue close to many delegates' hearts, "Exploring Anxiety and Depression among Pharmacy Students at a South African University". His presentation underscored the importance of mental health in students but also in academia and professional practice.

### A night to remember: The Gatsby Gala Dinner

The conference culminated in an unforgettable "Gatsby" Gala Dinner with a black and gold dress code. Held in the elegant Adriatic Suite against the backdrop of a golden Cape Town sunset, the evening featured mouth-watering cuisine, Cape wines, and exuberant celebration. Prof Nadine Butler, as the Master of Ceremonies, ensured the evening flowed with humour and grace. APSSA Chairman Ms Lorraine Thom and Prof Sarel Malan addressed attendees, celebrating the achievements of the conference and the APSSA before presenting the annual awards. The rest of the evening was filled with laughter, lots of dancing and camaraderie, a perfect reflection of the APSSA spirit.

### Recognising excellence: 2025 Award Recipients

Since 1979, the APSSA has been at the forefront of promoting research in pharmaceutical sciences and fostering participation by younger scientists through initiatives such as the Young Scientist Competition. Additionally, the APSSA recognise excellence in research, teaching, and learning through our Publication Awards and Teacher of the Year Award. The awards presented for 2025 included the following:

#### Young Scientist Awards – Pharmaceutical Sciences

Winner: Jasoda Govender (University of KwaZulu-Natal) - *Lipoic Acid grafted Dextran (LA-D): A Novel Redox Responsive Hybrid Nanostructured Lipid Carrier for Enhanced Antibiotic Delivery against Bacterial Sepsis*



Jasoda receiving her award from Lorraine (APSSA Chair)

Runner-up: Nicezelle Gernandt (North-West University) - *Exploring ivermectin's nanocarrier-mediated topical and transdermal delivery with co-processed solid particles*



Nicezelle and Lorraine

#### Young Scientist Awards – Pharmacy Practice and Clinical Pharmacy (Joint winners)

Nqobani Dabengwa (Rhodes University) – *Pharmacy students' lived experiences and perceptions of mental health support structures at Rhodes University*

Mieke Oosthuizen (University of the Western Cape) – *Molecule to medicine charts: Evaluating proton pump inhibitor use in hospitalized paediatric patients*



Mieke and Nqobani with Lorraine

#### Distinguished Teacher of the Year

Dr Mariam Parker (University of the Western Cape)

#### Publication Awards

Pharmaceutical Chemistry: Lesetja Legoabe (North-West University). *Quinolone analogues of benzothiazinone: Synthesis, antitubercular structure-activity relationship and ADME profiling.*



Prof Lesetja Legoabe receiving his award

Pharmaceutics: Yahya Choonara (University of the Witwatersrand). *In vivo evaluation of a Nano-enabled therapeutic vitreous substitute for the precise delivery of triamcinolone to the posterior segment of the eye.*

Pharmacology: Cailin van Staden (North-West University). *Posttraumatic anxiety-like behaviour in zebrafish is dose-dependently attenuated by the alpha-2A receptor agonist, guanfacine.*



Cailin with Lorraine

Pharmacy Practice: Maxine Turner (University of the Witwatersrand). *Primary Care Drug Therapy pharmacists in South Africa: Practice settings and conditions treated.*

### Looking Ahead

This APSSA 2025 conference was proudly hosted by the School of Pharmacy of the University of the Western Cape. The connections made were impactful and we are looking forward to the next annual APSSA to meet up with old friends, new colleagues and collaborators to continue building, strengthening professional networks and lifelong friendships.

The message was clear that pharmaceutical sciences, clinical pharmacy, pharmacy practice and education in South Africa are thriving, collaborative and future-focused. The journey of “converging skills” will continue with renewed energy and vision.

### Appreciation to the exhibitors, sponsors and local organising committee

The success of this APSSA 2025 conference would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsor and exhibitors whose commitment to advancing pharmaceutical sciences is deeply appreciated.

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A special word of gratitude is extended to Nitsa Manolis and the UWC Local Organising Committee for their dedication, enthusiasm, and tireless efforts that ensured the outstanding success of this conference. The committee, comprising Prof Denzil Beukes, Prof Kene Obikeze, Prof Marique Aucamp, Prof Jane McCartney, Dr Erika Kapp, Ms Nicole Keuler, Ms Cosette Greyling, and Mr Rudy Maart, demonstrated exceptional commitment throughout. The UWC team was further strengthened by the invaluable support of postgraduate students and other academic staff members who assisted with numerous activities during the event

#### Access the full 2025 Conference Programme and Abstract Booklet (Flipbook):

<https://heyzine.com/flip-book/53b4d814af.html>



Prof Sarel Malan and Prof Michelle Viljoen with Lorraine Thom (APSSA Chair)



Prof Renier Coetzee (PSSA President), Lorraine Thom (APSSA Chair) and Nitsa Manolis