



SAAHIP Pharmacy Month 2025: One profession, many stories of service

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Introduction: The spirit of Pharmacy Month

Every year, Pharmacy Month invites pharmacists across South Africa to step into the public eye with renewed purpose. It is a time shaped by education, service and connection. It asks us to go beyond the walls in which we work and make the profession visible to the communities who rely on us. In 2025, the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists (SAAHIP) embraced this invitation with clarity and intention. Guided by the national theme Think Health, Think Pharmacy: One Profession, Many Roles, the organisation launched a coordinated national campaign that sought to highlight the depth, diversity and humanity of hospital and institutional pharmacy.

Campaign scope and objectives

The campaign was designed around two pillars outlined in the national proposal. The first was a school and community outreach programme, a deliberate effort to reach learners in every province, with a special emphasis on marginalised and rural schools. The second was a national digital storytelling initiative that would showcase the full spectrum of pharmacist roles within hospital and institutional pharmacy and foster interprofessional appreciation through collaborative messaging. Together, these components aimed to strengthen public understanding of pharmacy through education, uplift young people, unify branches and elevate SAAHIP's national presence.

Yet what unfolded across the country went further than any project proposal could predict. It became a tapestry of stories stitched together by pharmacists across South Africa who cared deeply about being seen, being understood and being present for the communities they serve. Through school hall conversations, clinical demonstrations, community activations, digital collaborations and national media features, the campaign reached more than six thousand people and became one of the most extensive Pharmacy Month initiatives in SAAHIP's history.

Bringing pharmacy to communities that needed it most

The heart of the campaign lived in the communities it touched. The proposal had called on branches to prioritise schools that lack exposure

to pharmacy, and across the country pharmacists honoured that call with empathy and creativity. They travelled to township classrooms, rural high schools and community learning centres where career guidance is rare, and healthcare professions feel distant. They did not arrive as lecturers or representatives but as people who once sat in similar classrooms and carried similar questions about their futures.

Provincial narratives and national reach

Eastern Cape

In the Eastern Cape, this purpose unfolded from the rolling hills of Zithulele and into the towns of Libode and Mdantsane, where branch pharmacists met learners through school outreach and educational sessions. The team shared their own journeys into the profession, speaking about resilience, service and the unseen roles pharmacists play in hospitals. The outreach in this province stretched beyond urban centres and into communities where healthcare careers are often imagined only at a distance.

Northern Gauteng

In Northern Gauteng, the spirit of collaboration defined their approach. Pharmacists joined hands with the student societies, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University Association for Pharmacy Students and Tshwane University of Technology Association of Pharmacy Students, creating intergenerational teams who spoke to learners as a unified front. They moved between schools such as Noordwyk and NMTsunene with an ease that bridged the gap between academic study and professional practice. Learners were not only given information about pharmacy careers, but they were also shown what pharmaceutical sciences look like when students and professionals stand together.

Mpumalanga

Mpumalanga created one of the most memorable expansions of the campaign by extending its reach beyond classrooms. After visiting five schools and engaging more than 1 600 learners, the branch took pharmacy education to the airwaves. On BCR FM, pharmacists explained the value of our profession to an estimated two thousand listeners. Through this radio dialogue, the province brought pharmacy

into homes and demonstrated how outreach can reach far beyond physical spaces.

KwaZulu-Natal inland

In KwaZulu Natal (KZN), branches brought their own signature depth. KZN Inland's programme stretched across hospital corridors, school grounds and community spaces. At Mosvold Hospital, pharmacists held patient education sessions and school visits that touched on Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), and medication safety. Community activations at malls allowed teams to speak directly to the public about responsible medicine use. Life Hilton Hospital initiated a month-long internal programme that included clinical talks, vaccine education, interdisciplinary engagement and appreciation activities for staff. The Inland branch also uplifted local learners through fundraising for stationery and food support and ended the month with a wellness hike that reminded pharmacists that caring for communities begins with caring for themselves.

KwaZulu-Natal coastal

KZN Coastal brought similar richness across six major hospitals, where pharmacists moved between clinical departments, schools and community events. Their activities demonstrated that hospital pharmacists occupy a vital space inside the machinery of healthcare and carry expertise that strengthens patient safety and public health. Their engagements with patients, learners and staff showed how embedded pharmacists are within hospital ecosystems and how essential their presence is to collaborative care.

North West

The North West branch carried the campaign into the homes of the elderly, into rehabilitation spaces and into early childhood settings. Through medicine safety sessions at old age homes, addiction prevention dialogues in community centres and health awareness at primary schools and kindergartens, pharmacists emphasised that pharmaceutical care touches every stage of life. The work in this province showed that pharmacy does not exist in one environment but flows into families, classrooms and support systems across generations.

Western Cape

In the Western Cape, the message of Pharmacy Month took the form of visual storytelling. Clinical pharmacists featured in educational videos that unpacked hospital roles with clarity and professionalism. Displays at Netcare Blaauwberg made the often-invisible structures of pharmacy visible to hospital staff and the public. Through digital and physical storytelling, the province positioned pharmacists as integral to clinical decision making and patient safety.

Limpopo

Limpopo brought together academic energy, clinical expertise and community centred health messaging. Their collaboration with the University of Limpopo Association of Pharmacy Students, hospital teams and community health partners illustrated how pharmacy is strengthened when students, clinicians and rural communities stand in conversation with one another. Their antimicrobial stewardship symposium added an additional layer of scientific engagement to the

campaign, ensuring learners and community members were exposed to both the art and science of pharmacy.

Southern Gauteng

Southern Gauteng, with its fully digital approach, carried the campaign's purpose into the online world. Their educational content brought pharmacy to the screens of the public, ensuring that those who could not attend outreach events could still learn about hospital roles, medicine safety and the value of clinical pharmacy. Their posts contributed to the national digital engagement increase of 129.7 percent and ensured SAAHIP's message remained active and accessible throughout the month.

Northern Cape and Free State

In the Northern Cape and Free State, one of the most dynamic contributions emerged. The branch co-hosted an Instagram Live in partnership with the Northern Cape Department of Health. More than a thousand people joined the conversation as pharmacists discussed their roles across facilities and levels of care. It became a national moment of unity and transparency, showcasing that pharmacists are key contributors to the healthcare system.

Across all these branches, a shared truth took shape. Pharmacy does not live behind a counter. It lives in communities. It lives in conversations. It lives wherever education and care meet.

Digital storytelling and national visibility

The second pillar of the campaign brought pharmacy to national audiences. The One Hospital, Many Pharmacists campaign showcased the wide range of roles that sustain hospital systems, from oncology to procurement, from ward based clinical services to pharmacovigilance. The Know Your Pharmacist challenge brought nurses, doctors and other professionals into the conversation, allowing them to highlight what pharmacists contribute to patient care. This public endorsement strengthened interprofessional appreciation and built trust with the communities watching.

SAAHIP also increased national visibility through the Espresso Morning Show feature, the presidential campaign opening message, the World Pharmacists Day messaging in alignment with the FIP campaign and the relaunch of the SAAHIP website. These initiatives extended the reach of Pharmacy Month beyond provincial borders and into national media spaces.

What this campaign means for pharmacists

Pharmacy Month 2025 was not simply a project carried out by branches. It reflected who pharmacists are and how deeply we care about the communities we serve. It showed learners that a pharmacist can be a teacher, a researcher, a clinician or a steward of safe medicine use. It showed communities that pharmacy is accessible, and people-centred. It showed healthcare workers that pharmacists bring critical decision making to every level of care.

What this campaign means for SAAHIP

For SAAHIP as an organisation, the campaign marked a significant milestone. It demonstrated that all branches can work together

under a unified national strategy. It strengthened relationships between pharmacy students, professionals, healthcare facilities, the Department of Health and the public. It provided evidence that SAAHIP can coordinate national initiatives with measurable impact and meaningful public engagement. It deepened organisational identity and created a sense of shared purpose across the country.

Conclusion

Most importantly, it reaffirmed that when South Africa thinks about health, the profession of pharmacy must be part of that landscape. The 2025 campaign reminded the country that pharmacists are not only custodians of medicines but custodians of safety, access, education and care.

Pharmacy Month 2025 strengthened the profession, touched approximately six thousand lives and positioned SAAHIP as a national leader in public education and professional advocacy. It was a demonstration of unity, service and collective pride. And it leaves a legacy that branches can build on in the years ahead.

Acknowledgments

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