



Bright future looming for PCDT pharmacists!

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For many years, Primary Care Drug Therapy (PCDT) pharmacists have been dreaming about the day they would be recognised in the medical arena for the role they play in healthcare and the value they can add to the health system.

PCDT is a supplementary training course accredited with the South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC). The scope of practice, competency standards and accreditation standards were published in Board Notice 384 of 2023, on 27 January 2023. According to SAPC's website, there is currently only one provider accredited to offer the course, namely the North-West University. After successful completion of the course, pharmacists must register the supplementary training with SAPC whereafter they may apply for a Section 22A(15) permit with the Director-General. After the permit has been issued, the pharmacist could apply for a practice number with the Board of Healthcare Funders, to claim consultation fees and prescribed medication through medical aids.

When I finished my studies as a PCDT pharmacist, I was expecting to have the support of a well-established platform for the PCDT pharmacist and to join a network of PCDT pharmacists that already offered the service to their patients and on behalf of medical aids. Great was the shock to find that the field was almost untouched, and we had to find our feet in the bigger picture and prove that the service we can offer is crucial for the primary healthcare setting. The world out there knew nothing about PCDT pharmacists. We had to start from scratch, but if there is one thing I can tell you, without any doubt, it is that starting a PCDT Clinic in your pharmacy will give your pharmacy a huge growth and cash flow injection.

About two years ago, the PCDT Task Team was formed to try and focus on certain key areas, such as:

1. Marketing of the service to patients in a uniform manner, in other words make sure that patients get the same professional service whenever they see a PCDT pharmacist, regardless of location.
2. Forming a platform where PCDT pharmacists can communicate with each other.
3. Introducing and negotiating with medical aids to include PCDT in their member benefits.
4. Making sure PCDT pharmacists are updated regularly with new clinical knowledge.
5. Increasing and broadening the scope of practice of the PCDT pharmacist.

In 2023, the PCDT Task Team was formally adopted under the wings of the South African Association of Community Pharmacists (SAACP) as a special task group with their full support. We are very thankful for this. This was a huge step forward having a recognised and established body in the healthcare arena supporting us and helping PCDT find its rightful place in the South Africa healthcare system.

2024 seems to be the year of breakthroughs for PCDT pharmacists as Discovery Health Medical Aid endorsed and adopted the services offered by a PCDT pharmacist under their umbrella of approved healthcare services they offer to their members. Several other medical aids are also starting to pay for the services that PCDT pharmacists offer. With the number of PCDT pharmacists increasing yearly, it is envisioned that PCDT pharmacists will start to play a bigger integral role in the healthcare sector on primary care level.

I encourage each PCDT pharmacist to join the PSSA as a member and select SAACP as sector of choice going forward in 2024. SAACP has opened its doors to us and enabled us to use their platform as the PCDT Task Team. We can only benefit from the support they give us. Our aim is to make the PCDT pharmacist way more visible and prominent and offer a support service to all PCDT pharmacists wanting to start their own PCDT clinic. We know the obstacles PCDT pharmacists are facing out there, and we want to make sure we break through those barriers and obstacles currently prohibiting or delaying PCDT pharmacists from getting their clinics off the ground.

I want to encourage PCDT pharmacists to join our Task Team and SAACP. Make sure you are a SAACP member so that we can unite in our numbers and build PCDT into its rightful place. If you are not yet a PSSA member apply online at <https://www.pssa.org.za/online-application.html>. If you are a PSSA member and wish to check/change your sector, then send an email to info@pssa.org.za and include your SAPC P-number.

They have given us their commitment and support. Let us do the same and join them by becoming members. As a member you will also be included in all important PCDT updates and communication going forward.

