



Advancing pharmaceutical practice in South Africa: embracing the global stage

Natalie Schellack

This year, the profession of pharmacy in South Africa is presented with unique opportunities for growth and innovation. With the prestigious FIP World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences scheduled to take place in Cape Town in 2024, it presents a platform for South African pharmacists to exchange knowledge, collaborate, and address critical issues facing our profession. In preparation it is pertinent to reflect on the pressing challenges and pertinent topics that demand our attention.

One such a major issue and urgent need is to enhance access to healthcare across South Africa. While notable progress has been made, disparities in healthcare provision persist, particularly in underserved and rural areas. Pharmacists play a vital role in bridging this gap, but we must ensure that they are empowered with the necessary resources, training, and support to deliver quality care to all South Africans. The burden of diseases presented to South Africa, are opportunities for pharmacists to assist.

One notable development in HIV service delivery in South Africa is the consideration of Pharmacist-Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Therapy (PIMART) legislation. This initiative aims to enhance access to HIV testing, prevention, and treatment services by allowing pharmacists with supplementary training to prescribe and manage antiretrovirals, including pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), antiretroviral therapy (ART), and post-exposure prophylaxis. However, the implementation of PIMART has faced challenges, including legal disputes and the need for regulatory pathways to establish pharmacy-delivered HIV services effectively. The ongoing debates and legal proceedings surrounding PIMART underscore the complexities and controversies surrounding the integration of pharmacists into HIV care in South Africa. Despite the potential benefits of expanding access to HIV services through PIMART, the country faces hurdles related to regulatory frameworks, cost considerations, and the need for multi-council collaboration to navigate these challenges effectively. The outcome of this court case will significantly impact the future of HIV care and treatment in South Africa, highlighting the critical intersection of healthcare policy, legislation, and public health initiatives in combating the HIV epidemic.

Another critical concern is the rising burden of non-communicable chronic diseases. South Africa faces a growing prevalence of conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases. As is often the case, pharmacists are often the first point of contact for managing these conditions, not only by consulting

and providing medication but also by actively engaging in patient education, lifestyle interventions, and collaborative care models.

One of the most common chronic diseases in South Africa is diabetes. In 2019, there were approximately 1.63 million people living with diabetes and 1.68 million people living with hypertension in South Africa. This is a significant increase from previous years, and it is expected to continue to rise in the coming years. This is a significant burden on the healthcare system, as both diabetes and hypertension are a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, stroke, and other serious health conditions. Cardiovascular disease is a major cause of death and disability in South Africa. In 2019, there were approximately 1.57 million people living with cardiovascular disease in South Africa.

Cancer is another major cause of death and disability in South Africa. In 2019, there were approximately 1.32 million people living with cancer in South Africa. This is a significant burden on the healthcare system, as cancer is a complex and often expensive disease to treat.

The burden of chronic diseases in South Africa is a significant public health challenge. It is important for pharmacists within the multidisciplinary team to work together to address this challenge and improve the health and well-being of the South African population. This may involve implementing evidence-based interventions to prevent and manage chronic diseases, improving access to quality healthcare services, and addressing the social determinants of health that contribute to chronic disease risk.

Pharmacists and allied pharmacy personnel in South Africa are essential healthcare professionals who play a critical role in ensuring the quality and accessibility of pharmaceutical services for the country's population.

In addition to these pressing concerns, the FIP World Congress will undoubtedly shed light on other relevant topics, including pharmaceutical regulations, antimicrobial resistance, pharmaceutical education, and the integration of traditional medicine into mainstream healthcare. These discussions will provide international and South African pharmacists with invaluable insights and inspiration to elevate their practice and contribute to the overall advancement of pharmaceutical care.

As the FIP World Congress approaches, let us seize this opportunity to showcase South Africa's commitment to excellence, innovation, and inclusivity within the profession of pharmacy. It is imperative

that we engage in meaningful dialogue, share our experiences, and collaborate with international experts to spearhead positive change within our local context.

We encourage all South African pharmacists, and allied pharmacy personnel, to actively participate in the FIP World Congress, whether by attending the sessions, presenting research, or engaging in networking opportunities. Let us collectively seize this moment to amplify our voices, drive innovation, and enhance the role of pharmacists in shaping the future of healthcare in South Africa.

For more information about the FIP World Congress in Cape Town, visit <https://capetown2024.fip.org/>.

Bibliography

- Statista. Sufferers from chronic health conditions in South Africa 2019, by disease. 2023. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1116079/population-suffering-from-chronic-health-conditions-in-south-africa-by-disease/2>.
- Mbanya JC, Motala AA, Dlamini M. The need for an integrated approach for chronic disease research and care in Africa. *Frontiers in Public Health*. 2017;5:275.
- Akindele MO, Useh U. Multimorbidity of chronic diseases of lifestyle among South African adults. *Pan African Medical Journal*, 2021;38(332). <https://doi.org/10.11604/pamj.2021.38.332.15109>.
- Grafiati. Bibliographies: 'Chronic diseases - South Africa'. 2022. Available from: <https://www.grafiati.com/en/literature-selections/chronic-diseases-south-africa/5>
- Nduna M, Mash B. Multimorbidity in South Africa: Is the health system ready? *Journal of Public Health in Africa*. 2023;14(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/26335565231182483>.