

SAACP honours Gary Köhn



Christine Venter and Gary Köhn

At the 66th Annual General Meeting of the South African Association of Community Pharmacists (SAACP), the Julius Israelsohn Award was bestowed on Gary Michael Köhn for his dedicated, unstinting and exemplary service to the pharmacy profession, in particular the community pharmacy sector.

Motivation for the award – by Pep Manolas

Gary Michael “Can I help you Mr. President” Köhn was born in Brakpan on 18/08/1947. Gary finished primary school at Brakpan Oos Primere Skool 1959 and secondary school at Stoffberg Hoër Skool in 1964. He graduated at Potchefstroom Universiteit van Christelike Onderwys in 1969.

It was here that Gary met and was smitten by Magsi. They married and together produced 4 wonderful children Michael, Jonathan, Vanessa and Alexander.

On graduating, Gary worked as Responsible Pharmacist at Highway Pharmacy, from 1971 – 1979, and then became managing director and fifty per cent owner of Kenmere Pharmacy. He finally opened his own Gary Köhn Pharmacy in Florida Park Roodepoort in 1980.

Negotiating Gary Köhn’s career path through the 80s and 90s is like walking through a mine field. I will not guide you through it or else we will be here until tomorrow.

There was no plan or rationale to his activities. He sat on the National Executive Committees of both the PSSA and the SAACP and revolved through the Southern Gauteng branches at will, holding almost every position as office bearer, from secretary to treasurer to chairman.

Gary has been recognised as Honorary Life Member of the Branch Committee by both PSSA Southern Gauteng and SAACP Southern Gauteng, making it easy for him to switch at any given moment from one Committee to the other. He became President of the PSSA in 1992/1993.

As though serving on the committees was not enough, Gary was appointed by the then Minister of Health, Dr Rina Venter to the Medicines Control Council (MCC) in 1991, a position he held until 1996.

During 1994 Gary was elected to the SA Pharmacy Council on which he served 3 terms of office. This included a term on the Interim Council appointed again by the Minister of Health.

Gary served simultaneously on both the MCC and the SAPC. At the SAPC, he served on the Practice Committee, the Executive Committee and the Committee for Preliminary Inquiry. He also chaired the MCC’s Policy Committee and was Vice Chairman of the Scheduling Committee. He served on both SAACP and PSSA Branch Committees as well as their NECs all at the same time. He was saddened one day that his dog no longer recognised him.

Gary Köhn was elected to be a director of 7 companies – Medikredit, Pharmnet, Pharmacy Alliance, Pharmacy Mutual, Pharmacy Management Services, SAPDC and SARCD A Trade Exhibitions (Pty) Ltd.

Gary Köhn has completed five Comrades marathons and five Two Oceans marathons and has a black belt in both karate and judo.

Gary has been recognised for his contribution to the PSSA National Executive and the profession on a number of occasions. To mention a few, he is an Honorary Life Member of the PSSA, an Honorary Life Member of the SAACP, and an Honorary Life Member of the branch committees of both PSSA and SAACP. He was also awarded the Sam Moss Award, the Jack Bloom Award and one most unusual award known as the Hans Snyckers Award.

One award has eluded him however since its inception in 1988 and that is the prestigious Julius Israelsohn Award, which is the highest award that can be conferred on a community pharmacist.

Julius Israelsohn dedicated a life time of service to the pharmacy Profession, and in particular to community pharmacy. He served as chairman of the South African Retail Chemist and Druggists Association (SARCD A) for six terms of office from 1961 to 1972. He was awarded Honorary Life Membership of SARCD A in 1968 for dedicated, unstinting and exemplary service to the pharmacy profession, and in particular to SARCD A.

J B Israelsohn was the first South African pharmacist to be elected as Fellow of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. He was also elected to the South African Pharmacy Board, a position he held from 1976 to 1988.

Gary Köhn, twice president of SAACP (1988-1989 and 2005-2007) has dedicated a life time of service to the pharmacy profession, in particular to community pharmacy. For this lifelong sacrifice, the National Executive Committee of the SAACP bestowed the Julius Israelsohn Award on him.