



A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

Pharmacy at the crossroads

I don't know about you, but when I first read the SAACP symposium news, and saw this phrase, my immediate reaction was "Oh puh-lease! That old saw!" After all, when you've been in the profession for as long as I have, it rears its head with repetitive monotony. Then I thought about it. And I realised that, actually, it's fine. Of course, we're going to be at a crossroad.

Not necessarily the same crossroad. I hope. But try driving anywhere. And not just in a teeming metropolis. Even in rural Groot Marico (which I visit fairly often, if I'm lucky), where there are only two tarred roads (if memory serves me correctly, which at my age is highly unlikely), you WILL come to a crossroad. It may be merely a crossing of two dirt roads, apparently in the middle of nowhere, but the more you keep moving, the more crossroads you will encounter. Each one brings its own challenges and its own decisions which must be made. If you make the wrong choice, you may end up in the wilderness, be it the urban jungle or the undeveloped countryside.

So, rather reluctantly accepting the fact that pharmacy may in fact be at a crossroad okay, let's be truthful – *accepting* the fact that pharmacy is at a *new* crossroad, which direction are we going to choose? Is it, as it usually is, a case of "adapt or die"? I rather suspect it is. We need to accept responsibility for our actions and reactions. If we intend to survive and, please almighty, thrive, then we need to make sure that we follow the right direction. Be careful of Waze. The last time I used it to go to a country location without road names, it led me onto a steep hill, up a futile path to nowhere. Coincidentally on that same day at that same time, Nadine Butler was led up the same, decidedly ungarden-like path to the same point by Google Maps! All of which teaches us that even when we are given advice from a usually reliable source, we need to be careful.

We absolutely must be sensitive to our surroundings, to the territory (even if we consider it to be hostile) and must look for the path which is going to be the most logical under our current circumstances, which may actually be the most satisfying and the most rewarding in the long run. And then, even if it is somewhere that our emotions tell us we really don't want to go, we have to get over our (sometimes irrational) fears, and just do it. Do the right thing in the right way at the right time.

And, boy oh boy, by the time I read to the end of the SAACP request, I had my fist in the air and was shouting, "Yes, we can!"

Filling the pages

An unusual thing happened with this issue – pharmacists, including future pharmacists, actually submitted too much material to me for this issue. Thank you, SAPSF, for rising to the challenge. We're going to re-start a feature that was in the *SAPJ* for a while, but it died because of lack of input. The new SAPSF presidential committee has decided to change this. January/February 2019 will feature a SAPSF page, and hopefully we will continue with this into the future.

Branch news is always welcomed but is not always available to the *SAPJ*. Thank you to the Southern Gauteng PSSA branch and the Mpumalanga SAAHIP branch. I can't wait for this issue to be put to bed so that I can start processing the information that you have sent me. Hint: if you're interested in African Traditional Medicines, you are going to be jealous that you missed Mpumalanga's CPD event at the end of August.

We are like eggs?

I must admit that I was concerned for a moment when I started to read the President's column. He quotes CS Lewis, telling us that we're like eggs, and must hatch or go bad. I also remembered the past President's reflections on conference (*SAPJ*, September/October issue). He said, "The egg that breaks from the inside brings new life – if it is broken from the outside, it is the end of life."

My initial reaction was to wonder about the PSSA presidential obsession with eggs, but obviously, thought processes kicked in. I guess it ties in with the idea of coping with our new crossroads. How are you feeling at the moment? There has been so much upheaval and change, that it feels as though there's a third option that CS Lewis didn't consider – unseen hands (circumstances?) grab an egg, crack it open and scramble the contents. Maybe it's about to become a protein meal that will strengthen and bring energy to the eater, but it's a lousy feeling to be a scrambled egg in the making. Please may we change the game plan? May we rather hatch into eagles, and soar above our trials and tribulations to become the free spirits we were meant to be?

Lorraine Osman