



A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

The President's message

I never read the *SAPJ* from page one until the end. I receive articles at various times, and I read them in the order in which I receive them. But as I write this, I am thinking of the *SAPJ* as you receive it. You will only have turned a couple of pages before you arrive at the President's message.

I can't help but wonder if his message will have the same effect on you as did on me. Before reading anything else, no clinical articles, no sector reports, no media releases, reading this month's message left me with my mind racing.

Stéphan's advice on effecting change in our personal lives was sage and sensible. But it was also really challenging when applied to pharmacy, particularly community pharmacy.

We hear on a daily basis how unhappy many community pharmacists are. This isn't the time or place to go into detail about their problems, but I couldn't help wondering about how to apply Stéphan's principle of accepting what one has but changing what one cannot accept. Does it also apply in community pharmacy? Or are the changes beyond our control? Are we waiting for someone else to fix the problems? Can we fix them ourselves? Can we change, so that our focus is on something we can do, not something we can't? Really? We're faced with a huge conundrum here and I'd be interested in hearing your opinion on it.

And another President's column

The President of SAAHIP is clearly in sync with the President of the PSSA this month. She too speaks about change management and gives examples of positive action that we as pharmacists can take. I was really struck by one particular sentence: "These adversities themselves should not define our profession but how we overcome them, should." So I'd love to hear your examples of how we, as a profession, have overcome problematic situations.

Well done, Dr Nicolaou!

Every mother is proud when her children do well, and every dad too. Every lecturer is a surrogate parent to students, and feels equally proud when the students become graduates, and do well in their working environments. I must let you into a secret about Stavros and his student cohort. It's amazing how each cohort of students takes on a group identity. This group were a particularly difficult bunch! Not because they were rowdy or dreadful students or just plain unpleasant. This group egged each other on to work! Every one of them did well. In everything. And it wasn't only difficult for the lecturers. One student complained to me that he was quite satisfied to be a fifty percenter, but his mates insisted that he should do some work, so he consistently achieved marks in the mid to late sixties.

But I digress from the reason for mentioning Stavros Nicolaou. As you will see when you read the *Wits* news, only one pharmacist has ever received an honorary doctorate in South Africa, and that is Pravin Gordhan. And now it's Stavros' turn to receive an honorary DSc. Congratulations, kid! I'm proud of you. Still!



Cum laude

Kim Ward's column on current teaching methods made me realise that I was born at the wrong time. Rote learning was common practice when I was a student and when I was a lecturer. How incredibly boring. The active learning that Kim describes sounds so much more logical and so much more enjoyable. Personally, I find "traditional" lectures as boring as watching talking heads on television. (I was diagnosed with ADHD three years ago. Why didn't that happen when I was young? It would have made life much easier for me.)

I love the concept Kim describes, of the "expert patient" as a starting point, as well as the requirement of a pre-course externship in second year. It makes so much sense. Personally, as much as I love pharmacy legislation, law only develops a life when you see it in action. If you don't know the applications *before* you talk about it, it's as inspiring, and as soporific, as reading a telephone directory.

So well done on your Distinguished Teacher Award, Kim. You clearly deserve it!

YPG bingo

I can't resist it. I had to react to the YPG bingo questions. I couldn't attend the whole SAAHIP conference this year, but I was really happy that I could hear the Pearl presentations – always my favourite part of conference! That said, I loved the twist in the YPG bingo questions this year. "I travel the world with beer in cart, with knowledge to match every part" – this must surely be Andy Gray! Had I been there, which of the questions would I have identified myself with? Mm. Difficult – at least three of them! But not the one on numbers. I've always been better at working with words than with numbers. So I'm probably a mad sister or a mad hatter, as well as considering myself to be definitely "fun by the pound"!

Lorraine Osman