



## A first for the pharmacy profession – Wits University to confer honorary doctorate to Stavros Nicolaou

Aspen Pharmacare's Stavros Nicolaou, a BPharm graduate from Wits University, is set to become South Africa's first pharmacist to receive an Honorary Doctorate in the Medical Sciences field (Doctor of Science in Medicine – Honoris Causa).

In another first, Nicolaou joins Minister of Public Enterprises, Pravin Gordhan as the only other Pharmacist to receive an honorary doctorate from a South African higher education institution, Gordhan is a Doctor of Law and Nicolaou's one is in Medical Sciences.

Nicolaou joins a group of luminaries of 500 previous recipients who have received Honorary Doctorates since Wits University began conferring these in 1922 when Jan Smuts was the first recipient. Other prominent South Africans and Africans who have received honorary doctorates from Wits, include Nelson Mandela, Constitutional lawyer Arthur Chaskalson, Playwright Athol Fugard, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, International Diplomat Kofi Anan, Activists and Politicians Walter and Albertina Sisulu, Literary Giant Chinua Achebe, Helen Suzman, Thuli Madonsela, Artist Hugh Masekela and Businesspeople Adrian Gore of Discovery and Stephen Koseff of Investec.

Previous recipients from the medical fraternity, include amongst others, Phillip Tobias, Harry Seftel and Jerry Coovadia. Nicolaou's recognition is an exciting, new acknowledgment of the role that Pharmacists and the pharmacy profession are starting to assume in the healthcare system and more broadly in society. It is also an acknowledgment of the diverse base that the Pharmacy profession provides, for professionals to go out and make meaningful difference in all aspects of South African society.

This year's 4 recipients, whose honorary degrees will be conferred at a graduation ceremony at the Wits Great Hall later this year include Dr. Brigalia Bam, the former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission, Dr. Zanele Mbeki former First Lady and spouse of former President Thabo Mbeki, Nicolaou and Prof. Hazel Sive, a leading engineer.

In announcing the 2019 recipients, Wits University Vice Chancellor, Professor Adam Habib mentioned to Nicolaou that, 'this is an honour and recognition of your remarkable and invaluable contribution to the people of South Africa.'

Nicolaou, founding President of SAAP (South African Association of Pharmacists in Industry) is an integral member of the Aspen

team that has seen the company evolve from a small business in Durban, to what is now one of South Africa's most globalised companies and a world leader in anaesthesia and injectable anticoagulants, a significant scientific achievement for South Africa, for what are highly complex sterile manufacturing technologies.

Additionally, Nicolaou with the same Aspen management team, was instrumental in pioneering the first generic ARVs, that went on to save hundreds of thousands of lives on the African continent and became the backbone of the South African public ARV programme for many years. The programme is now the largest in the world.

Nicolaou has also actively contributed to public service and our country's social cohesion project, currently serving on the boards of both Brand South Africa and Proudly SA. He also serves on the Board of Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and the BRICS Business Council and has previously served on the Boards of a number of State-Owned Companies such as Transnet and SA Express Airways. He currently chairs the Public Health Enhancement Fund (PHEF), the PTG (Pharmaceutical Task Group) and PHARMISA (Pharmaceuticals Manufactured in SA).

On receiving Prof. Habib's message, Nicolaou commented that, "The pharmacy profession is a highly understated one and one that is not properly recognised for its true value and contribution to society. To receive this accolade from my Alma Mater, Wits University, is a singular honour, particularly given the many, many pharmacists that have successfully contributed to so many facets of our country, not only in pharmacy, but in business, entrepreneurship and other areas. I hope this recognition helps further uplift the profession and assists in inspiring other colleagues, particularly younger colleagues to aspire to greater professional heights. My other wish is that it further assists in positioning the profession as one that is rightfully amongst those that make amongst the most meaningful societal contributions. I look forward to other colleagues joining me on the list in future. Of course, no recognition of this nature is an individual effort and



Stavros Nicolaou

much credit should go to my colleagues at Aspen, who have been as much a part of this as I have."

Nicolaou is extremely passionate about the manufacturing sector and placing industrialisation at the centre of our country's economic policy. Pharmaceutical imports are a significant

contributor to South Africa's trade imbalance and consequently its current account deficit. Through his participation in the manufacturing circle, he continues to be a great proponent of "Buy Local" and achieving policy cohesion to reduce imported products, accelerate transformation and turning South Africa into an exporter rather than an importer of value-added products.

## So you think you can Pharma? Wits pharmacy students pitch solutions

*PharmApprentice is a curriculum innovation where Wits Pharmacy students develop entrepreneurial skills in a competition enabled by Aspen Pharmacare.*

It's a Friday morning in Aspen Pharmacare's Central Boardroom in Woodmead, Sandton. Undergraduate students from the Department of Pharmacy in the School of Therapeutic Sciences at Wits, pharmacy academics, and pharmaceutical business leaders have gathered for a showdown of new pharmaceutical business concepts and technologies.

Here teams of third-year Wits pharmacy students will present business proposals that they have developed as contestants of PharmApprentice, a programme launched by the Wits Department of Pharmacy in 2018 in partnership with Aspen Pharmacare.

Up for grabs by the winning team are certificates and a one-ounce silver coin each from the Scoin Shop, which commemorates the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Elie Wiesel. The winners travel to Port Elizabeth for a two-day tour of the Aspen Sterile Manufacturing Facility and industry-related seminars. The prize includes flights and a two-night stay in a hotel.

### A curriculum that equips for 4IR

"The PharmApprentice Programme forms part of the third-year Bachelor of Pharmacy undergraduate curriculum within the course of Pharmacy Practice at Wits. It is a compulsory programme that contributes towards the students' year marks," says Professor Yahya Choonara, Chair and Head of the Department of Pharmacy and Pharmacology at Wits University. "The practice of pharmacy requires graduates to be competent in business so that that they fuel economic growth through start-ups and in multinational corporations."

PharmApprentice uses a competition format to teach pharmacy students the basics of pharmaceutical entrepreneurship. The students are required to identify a consumer/patient healthcare market need and to develop a pharmaceutical business model around the concept that meets this need.

"PharmApprentice ensures that Wits graduates' pharmacy degree becomes a catalyst for positive economic development in South Africa. It lays the foundation for pharmacists to embrace

entrepreneurship and the Fourth Industrial Revolution [4IR]. Aspen is committed to youth empowerment and economic growth and the PharmApprentice programme builds business capability among new pharmacy graduates," says Stavros Nicolaou, Senior Executive for Strategic Trade at Aspen.

Nicolaou also delivers a lecture series on intellectual property, medicines importation, and strategic commercialization concepts as part of the PharmApprentice programme.

In developing their models, students practise financial projections and forecasts, accounting, market research, and viability analysis – all part of the curriculum to develop entrepreneurial thinking. Students also learn to apply pharmacy law, legislation and policies around intellectual property, medicines importation, and commercialisation.

### Pharmtrepreneurs

The 2018 PharmApprentice programme generated 13 outstanding business plans. These included apps to digitize prescriptions, share patient information, and address language barriers for patients travelling to foreign countries; pharmacy stock management and recruitment solutions; mobile sports pharmacy services; home-based oncology care and cardiac detection tech; and green, portable solar-powered portable cold-chain boxes.



*Aspen's Dr. Stavros Nicolaou stands to speak to PharmApprentice contenders flanked by Prof. Yahya Choonara, Head of Wits Pharmacy (right in profile) with members of the top three PharmApprentice teams during their 'elevator pitches' in Aspen boardroom in Midrand.*

The Pharmacy Practice steering committee, comprising Wits academic pharmacists Zelna Booth, Stephanie de Rapper, and Rubina Shaikh, and Andrew Jones (former Accountancy lecturer and Assistant Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management at Wits) scored each business plan against a rigorous academic rubric. PharmApprentice contenders then pitched their plans to external stakeholders at the Annual Wits Pharmacy INVEST Research Expo.

## Phinder pips all to 2018 PharmApprentice prize

Team Phinder was named PharmApprentice 2018 for their mobile app for use by both locums and pharmacies in need of locum services. A locum is a person who stands in temporarily for someone else of the same profession. Phinder's 'dial-a-locum'-type app features a calendar, geographical tracking, locum ratings, and payment. The app meets the need to bridge the communication gap between locums and pharmacies and to reduce administration related to locum employment.



L-R: Zelna Booth (Pharmacy Practice lecturer); Rubina Shaikh (Pharmacy Practice lecturer); Muhammed Saleem Seedat (Phinder); Lydia Bisetegan (Phinder); Nazihah Hoosen (Phinder); Jackie Tau (Aspen Group Manager: Social Economic Development); Noyolo Bhinca (Phinder); Tasneem Mehub Cassim (Phinder); Stephanie de Rapper (Pharmacy Practice lecturer); Saminah Badat (Phinder), Andrew Jones (Pharmacy Practice external lecturer).

### Phinder Winner Words

Team Phinder members shared their experience of PharmApprentice and their visit to Aspen's facility:

- "Visiting Aspen was an eye-opening experience. It impressed upon me the fact that the knowledge acquired at university is not only theoretical but also applicable in the real world and in our future careers" – Saminah Badat
- "Being allowed to tour the production sites definitely helped better my understanding of theory taught in lectures, which at times can be quite abstract. Furthermore, it also made me realize the importance of such content" – Muhammed Seedat
- "It was incredible seeing the work we learn, especially pharmaceuticals, in the industrial environment. I see pharmacy from a different perspective now" – Tasneem Cassim
- "I left feeling inspired and am thankful to everyone who took the time to enrich our understanding" – Nazihah Hoosen
- "I was exposed to an entirely different world in terms of pharmacy. It has sparked my interest in manufacturing" – Noyola Bhinca



Team Phinder, winner of PharmApprentice 2018, win externships and a two-day tour of Aspen Sterile Manufacturing Facility in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

"PharmApprentice was a major success in its first year. Part of the mission of Wits Pharmacy is to empower every pharmacy student to achieve more by unlocking the hidden value within their pharmacy degree and PharmApprentice is the Wits Pharmacy edge," says Choonara.

### PharmApprentice 2019

Wits BPharm III students were introduced to PharmApprentice on 14 January 2019 during an introductory Pharmacy Practice lecture. The first PharmApprentice official event took place on 20 March 2019.