



President's Message

Presidential Address to the AGM

Stéphan Möller, President: PSSA

Friends and colleagues in pharmacy

Please accept a heartfelt thanks for the outstanding and life-saving work you all do on a daily basis. A pharmacist is rarely praised, yet without you, the healthcare environment would certainly not be able to function.

Permit me to share a few thoughts on matters which I believe will have a significant impact on our profession in the foreseeable future.

I am convinced that most, if not all who make South Africa their home, are deeply concerned about our future and the future of our nation. As our 25th year of a New South Africa slowly draws to a close, the dilemmas we are currently facing are not alien or new to us. They have been with us for a considerable period and have all grown to near unmanageable magnitudes. Poverty with violent crime is still on the rise and they make seriously dangerous bed fellows. Violence against women and children are at an all-time high. I will leave it to you to add to this list.

Even closer to home, a current and very real divide between 'haves' and 'have-nots' of sufficient healthcare has been thrust under the spotlight by the country's new and inspired Health Minister. Both Dr Mkhize and our President, Mr Ramaphosa, have weighed in on the delivery of healthcare to all South Africans. The latter has done so from the beginning of his tenure as Head of State. In fact, the office of the Presidency has actively been driving National Health and Universal Access to Health since his Presidential term started. The latest serious move was made by Dr Mkhize on Thursday, 8 August 2019, with his taking the new NHI Bill to Parliament.

It is a fact that a lot of money and time must be spent before National Health becomes a viable reality. Unfortunately, neither the health sector, nor the country, can afford both money and time. While the war is raging, all pharmacists have two choices. We have a choice to ignore what is happening around us and focus only on our patient, as we well should. Alternatively, we can choose to take part in the debate around universal healthcare coverage, its funding mechanism through NHI and the pooling of all health resources, whilst looking after our patients.

Now, more than ever, pharmacists have a chance to make themselves heard. We have a chance to position ourselves so we can present solutions. There will be enough naysayers together with uninformed politicians weighing in on this topic. The time has come for us to make a stand for ourselves and our patients. To inform the decision makers of our value and the unique solutions we bring to the many challenges of National Health.

For those that feel disheartened by this seemingly never-ending process, swallow down your protests and man up. The fight has intensified notably. We owe it to ourselves, our forebears and those who come after us, to preserve our profession and persuade whoever needs persuasion that South Africa has a national asset in its pharmacists, who are serious about their profession and serious about the positive role we want to play in the old and new health economy.

I invite each and every member who raises their hand, to become part of the PSSA's and broader pharmacists' interest groups, and join in the collaboration to position ourselves as pharmacists and pharmacy optimally in the changing health environment that is imminent.

God save and bless our precious country!