



A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

Another year, another life

Well, that's it – to all intents and purposes, 2019 is over. I hope you've had a brilliant year!

For me, it's been a new experience. I couldn't imagine the sense of liberation that comes from not having to fight traffic twice a day to get to the office! I also couldn't imagine the freedom that I would have because I've been able to decide which hours in the day will be used for work, and where I'd work from!

Another revelation to me was that, if you're not obliged to go to floor to ceiling meetings (that's what it felt like to have a diary full of appointments), it can actually be quite enjoyable to go to the odd meeting or two. So thank you, SAAHIP, for keeping me on the Exco!

Introducing the Medpharm team

You know that the SAPJ doesn't miraculously appear from nowhere. At least I hope you do. You know that Nitsa and I work on both the SAPJ and SAPA. If you've been around the block a few times, you will also know that when the PSSA joined forces with Medpharm Publications to produce the two journals, it was the best thing that happened since sliced bread!

Right now, I'm feeling pretty stupid. I cannot remember ever introducing you to the Medpharm team. They're the ones who make sure that the SAPJ and SAPA actually happen. So I apologise to them, and to you, for my mistake.

I don't remember ever introducing you to the Medpharm ladies. (Yes, there are two gentlemen, one of whom many of us remember well – Opel Greeff and Pierre Marais are the directors of Medpharm.) (Oh dear, nowadays there are many young pharmacists who don't even know how Opel influenced the course that pharmacy has taken.) As a doctor and professor of pharmacology, he recognised and encouraged pharmacist initiated therapy. (He has other talents and skills too, but we won't go into them now.) Together with the SA Pharmacy Council, Opel was the pioneer and developer of the first Primary Care Drug Therapy (PCDT) course that benefited many patients. And that course eventually morphed into the current course, which meets the requirements of the Essential Medicines Programme.

Two very talented and persuasive ladies sell advertising for our journals. We couldn't manage without the income that they generate. So thank you, Sandy Laranja (SAPJ) and Cheryl Stulting (SAPA). We totally understand and know that you depend on the currency and relevance of articles that may (or may not) attract advertising revenue. We also couldn't manage without the artistic and technical skills of Celeste Bron, who is responsible for layout and design – I'm in awe of you!

Then there are the people who intimidate me – between them, these four women have knowledge, skills and expertise in fields that are foreign to me. And possibly (probably) to you as well. They manage the business and/or technical sides of eleven journals. Yes, eleven. They are Robyn Marais (title co-ordination), Ineke Vermeulen (finances and accounts), Chandré Blignaut (publisher) and Ina du Toit (CEO and managing head of academic publishing services) – I have no idea how you do it! Thank you, too.

The original decision to collaborate with Medpharm Publications for our journal was because we recognised that publishing was not, and still is not, the PSSA's core reason for existence. It was a brilliant decision. We owe them a deep debt of gratitude for everything they have done and continue to do for us. Thank you to everyone who is involved in our journals – we appreciate it.

Pharmacy Month

It is clear that, in some areas, Pharmacy Month was a great success, mainly because of the huge effort that went into making it work. I had a problem this month. A really wonderful problem! In past years, the problem we were faced with was that there were seldom enough contributions to warrant inclusion in the SAPJ. What fun – this month there were too many submissions to include! (Please – give us the same problem every month!) My solution is to include one report in this issue, and then one report per issue for the following two issues.

I've heard it said that every month should be Pharmacy Month – after all, the need to educate patients about their medicines and their health will never disappear, and besides, it's what we do. It is customary, however, to focus on a specific aspect of medicines and health during Pharmacy Month. I must admit that I was fairly ambivalent about this year's theme. As pharmacists, do we advise patients about mental health issues? Certainly we speak to patients about medicines used to treat mental illness, but actual mental health? Do we find it difficult to speak about mental health?

The Free State branch of the PSSA had an action packed month! A great deal of thought, imagination and effort went into each activity. What did I like most about it? That's a difficult question to answer. I liked the scavenger hunt, which was "designed to create awareness of the impact that exercise has on mental wellbeing". The fruit parcels with leaflets on stress management were certainly novel. The gesture which spoke to me directly, however, were the hearts given to the nurses. We all need to be reminded that we also need to give support and care to patients with mental health problems.

Lorraine Osman