



# President's Message

## A new beginning

Stéphan Möller, President: PSSA

For most pharmacists in South Africa, the new year has long since passed. However, as this column forms part of the first journal for 2020, it remains on-point to extend my best wishes to you and your loved ones.

Furthermore, it is not only the start of a new year, but also the start of a new decade. We can afford ourselves to leave the past where it belongs. We've received as a gift a new, clean, fresh year, with no mistakes and no regrets.

I do not particularly have an opinion on fortune telling and similar practices. However, whilst recently reading the business section of a Sunday paper, I found an article that resonated with me. It stated that 2020 is the year of the metal rat – the first of the twelve Chinese animal cycles, and for this reason, 2020 is considered a year of new beginnings and renewals. The metal element is said to create water, which means productivity and activity for the metal industries. These include the production of cars and machinery, IT, high tech industry, cosmetics, and health. According to the article, all the actions initiated this year are driven by success and as such, we need to follow our goals with confidence and determination.

So, instead of allowing the hurt of our world, the economy, the state of healthcare, the increasing number of orphans and number of deaths in our country, to dissuade and disarm us, I for one am going to focus on what positive effect I can have on this very same society, one act of kindness at a time.

Whether it is someone I can help at the ATM, lifting a heavy article off the shelf for an old lady, or dispensing a prescription to the best of my ability and ensure my patient's safety, I have made the conscious decision to have a positive effect on my immediate surroundings.

I oftentimes hear of youngsters challenging their friends on social media and donating to a cause after having done something outrageous and capturing the moment by taking a video. Well, this column is as close

as it will get for me to challenge you. Your conscience will be your only audience (read social media) in this instance though.

The scene is set for you to man up to 2020's challenges. As a pharmacist, you play a crucial part in the health environment of this country. Your positive actions will speak much louder than words could ever accomplish. It is in a scientist's DNA to question the *status quo* and agree only after very careful consideration of the facts gathered. Pharmacists are considered to be advanced scientists, which may be the reason why we sometimes find it difficult to agree on issues, the way forward and other actions of solidarity.

There is a common unifier however, which is the fact that our end goal is always to improve the health of our patients. Let this then be our guiding light, to unite us as pharmacists first and a Society second. Let politics not be our focus, but rather what we can do to make circumstances a little better, one action at a time.

I am convinced that each pharmacist's individual contribution to a positive act of kindness, whatever it may be, will undoubtedly have a lasting and noticeable effect on our country.

Having received my inspiration for this column's theme from the Chinese New Year, it is only fitting that I end this thought process with two Chinese proverbs:

*"If your mind is strong, all difficult things will become easy; if your mind is weak, all easy things will become difficult."* – As a registered pharmacist, you have all conquered the world of chemistry and pharmacology. This would not have been possible for you if you did not have, and still have, a strong mind.

*"When the winds of change blow, some people build walls and others build windmills."* – I look forward to engaging with you this year. May we build lasting windmills together that will serve our profession and our patients long after our departure.