



# A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

## Condolences to the Pillay family

At the time of going to print, Prof Viness Pillay, from Wits University, had just passed away following a long illness. Our sincerest condolences go to his family, especially his wife and daughter, as well as his friends and colleagues.

The next issue of the *SAPJ* will carry a full obituary, but it doesn't seem appropriate not to mention it now. Viness was a true visionary, whose research took him into territories unexplored by most pharmaceutical scientists. On a personal level, I have really appreciated the assistance he gave me on the *SAPJ* – he was always available to help me when I needed to make difficult decisions about pharmaceuticals-related articles.

## Funerals in the time of COVID-19

Funerals are confusing. For the family, they are intensely personal, as one says goodbye to a person whose very existence is intimately entwined with the mourner's life. Sometimes, it feels as though friends and colleagues are invading the family's privacy, as they come to terms with the loss of their loved one.

Friends and colleagues, however, feel the loss intensely, too. They need to release their own feelings of loss and develop their own acceptance. Funerals are important for this, too.

This morning, I attended Viness's funeral service. Obviously, only 50 people who are close to the family were permitted to attend in person. The service, however, was broadcast on YouTube, and I feel very privileged to have been allowed to attend and pay my respects and say farewell to Viness.

It was a strange experience, to sit alone at home in front of my computer, but at the same time to be at the funeral. It was not in the least like watching a movie on television – it was impossible to be detached and a mere observer because obviously emotions colour the way you interact with what is happening on the screen.

It was a beautiful experience, and I thank his family for permitting me to attend – in the time of COVID-19, we can't take it for granted.

## Lockdown News

If you read nothing else in this issue (and I'm actually sure you'll read it from cover to cover), do read Lockdown News. It begins with a very personal account of how it feels to go through a COVID-19 infection. Mehboob Cassim is a Board Director of ICPA and the owner of a pharmacy in Cape Town. I really appreciate his sharing his experience with us. I am also in awe that even when he was ill, he took time to communicate with his clients, so that they would know that even if they contracted the disease, they would not be alone. His advice on how to cope with isolation is extremely useful. Thank you for sharing it with us.

I have also included a Facebook post, which was posted as a personal opinion but which contained much of what we have been reading about COVID-19. I thought long and hard before including it. The author obviously doesn't include references in the post, but having read it carefully, I could see nothing new or anything that hadn't been authenticated elsewhere. I appreciated her reminder that other viral infections can also have long term effects, which people sometimes forget. She also asks the question, "How dare you ....", when people do not take the necessary precautions to minimise and hopefully prevent infection. As healthcare professionals, I suspect we all would like to ask people that we see not wearing masks and not keeping an appropriate distance from others, "How dare you...?" As citizens, we also see what is happening to our economy, so we understand the need for people to become economically active again.

## Recognising our colleagues

I know that my colleagues and friends are suffering because of the sustained pressure and overwork. I know that our doctors and nurses and everyone else involved in healthcare are also suffering. Please know that you are appreciated, and so are your sacrifices. And thank you, SAAHIP KwaZulu-Natal Coastal branch, for taking the time to share your recognition that, worldwide, pharmacists are among the healthcare professionals who are suffering, and that they too need support as well as self-care.

**Lorraine Osman**