



# A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

What a month, year, century, life it's been so far. I'm not sure that any of us can keep up with everything that's going on at the moment. If you are, you're brilliant. Or maybe we all are. After all, every generation faces challenges that weren't there for the previous generation.

## PSSA Perspectives

There are a few things in this issue's PSSA Perspectives that really interested me. (Apart from the fact that the SAPJ is older than the PSSA!) There's been a lot going on in the PSSA and it's such a pleasure to be able to share it with you.

## Strategic objectives 2021

The strategic objectives are great. I know that there are the cynics amongst us who will say, "But we've tried that before", and that's fine – some issues recur frequently, while the way of dealing with others may need to change. The bottom line is that realisation of each of the objectives is important to all of us, and it's always good to have a fresh approach.

That's exactly what I like about the approach this year – specific national executive committee (Exco) members have been given the responsibility of leading activities in particular areas, with input from all Exco members. (And I'm sure that if you have strong feelings about or insight into any of these areas, your branch or sector representative on Exco will be happy to interact with you. Or you're welcome to write a letter to the SAPJ.)

I also like the fact that it is not a long shopping list of objectives – five objectives are more than enough for the moment. We must remember that the PSSA is a voluntary association, run by busy pharmacists who have demanding day jobs. Yes, there is an office to provide support, and yes, there are people there who have the knowledge and skills to carry out the responsibilities required of them. But it's the PSSA members, including the Exco, who can identify areas that would improve their working conditions and working relationships.

## A marriage made in heaven?

The collaboration between APSSA and SAAPI is an exciting development, and now that they have decided on it, it seems so obvious that academia and industry should work together. Each sector has its own needs and focus, but clearly, this has the potential to benefit both. I can't wait to see the results!

## Interaction with FIP

PSSA Perspectives highlights two recent activities that are highly relevant to South African pharmacy practice. The first is the alignment of the goals of the APSSA/SAAPI collaboration with the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) development goals.

The other was the participation by Jameel Kariem in the FIP virtual Community Pharmacy Conference. I personally appreciate the trouble he went to in order to ensure that he was prepared for the conference, and that he wrote a report for the SAPJ. Thank you, Jameel.

## Receiving the jab – a personal experience

Despite a couple of hiccups on the way, most of the elderly people in my family have received their first doses of the Pfizer vaccine. The sense of relief is amazing. Apart from one relative who was told to go to a hospital 555 km away for his first appointment, the rest of us have been able to go to places easily accessible by car. The sites were well organised and vaccinations progressed in an orderly way. I found it interesting that some needed to join long queues while others breezed through in 30 minutes. But I was really impressed by the fact that they recognised that elderly people could not stand for long periods, and there were enough chairs for everyone. One of the sites went a step further and had wheelchairs in case the old people overestimated their ability to move. And the best experience was my sister's – she was able to go to a drive-through site. What a pleasure!

## Inspirational pharmacists

I told you in the last issue of the SAPJ that there are pharmacists who I find to be inspirational. There are actually too many of them to mention, because every individual has their own strengths that can inspire and encourage other pharmacists.

I've been reading the latest nominations for Adcock Ingram OTC's *Sponsors of Brave*. In these turbulent times, it is wonderful to read about pharmacists who are quietly going about their business and making a difference in people's lives. And, yes, I am proud of them all, but it does warm my heart to see that at least three of the current nominations are ex-students of mine!

I will mention Dr Sham Moodley by name. No, he was not a student of mine and yes, at his young age, he quietly pursued his PhD in pharmacy. And guess what his topic was! Evaluating the impact of the change in regulations related to medicine pricing and pharmacy ownership in the private pharmaceutical sector of South Africa. In particular, his tracking of pharmacy ownership, in 2003 and 2014, makes an interesting read. (Spoiler alert – I'm going to tell you what he said in his conclusion. So don't read the next sentence if you want to Google his articles!) He showed that although opening of ownership to non-pharmacists resulted in more pharmacies being opened in urban areas, the rural areas haven't reflected the same growth. Mm, the challenge of translating admirable policies into workable legislation... (Now there's a good research topic for an enthusiastic young researcher!)

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