



# A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

## Destroying our communities

First it was the COVID-19 pandemic – life as we knew it changed, probably forever. Do you remember when you could greet someone by hugging them? And when we could hold face-to-face meetings instead of virtual ones? By now, even if we haven't been infected ourselves, we all know many people who have been infected, and friends and loved ones who have passed away. And you know, better than I do, the effect it's had on pharmacists and other healthcare professionals.

We're also all aware of the economic effect the lockdowns have had. Literally millions of jobs in both the formal and informal sectors were lost, especially in the beginning of the lockdown.

July 2021 was marked by civil unrest which erupted into violence and looting. The effects of the devastation are going to be with the country for a long time. We all watched in horror at the tragic destruction of businesses and buildings. Lives were lost in the process, and livelihoods were destroyed.

## Support for colleagues through the Independent Pharmacy Emergency Fund

The PSSA sent out the following paragraphs in a newsletter to its members.

The whole country was shocked by the unrest in the KZN, Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces earlier in July. A large number of businesses were affected by this, including more than 90 community pharmacies. Some of these pharmacies lost all equipment and stock, while others were completely destroyed. Although SASRIA insurance will pay out and cover some damages for those who had the cover, it won't cover all costs, e.g. salaries of staff, while the pharmacy is being rebuilt. A high proportion of these were independently-owned community pharmacies, which do not have access to the resources available to larger, corporate structures to fund their recovery. Their presence is critical to the delivery of comprehensive pharmaceutical services in many parts of the affected provinces. ICPA has set up the Independent Pharmacy Emergency Fund (IPEF) to raise funds to assist these destroyed pharmacies in rebuilding their businesses. The PSSA is calling on all members to donate to this fund should they be in a position to do so. No matter how small, any amount will make a difference to these pharmacy owners and all the staff they employ and the families of the employees who rely upon them for an income. The PSSA can assure members that ICPA set up the fund with guidance from Business for South Africa (B4SA) on managing,

governing, and disbursement of the funds. The allocation of the funds will be handled by a Disbursement Committee, which includes an independent auditor.

Pledges and requests for banking details can be emailed to [info@icpa.co.za](mailto:info@icpa.co.za).

## Sharing the reality

A dear friend, who is a hospital pharmacist in Durban, shared the following experience.

"I haven't had a clear enough mind to sit down and type a message out over the past few days.

My city that was a calm, 'friendly' place has turned into a war zone. We haven't been able to go to work since Monday. I managed to work for 2 hours on Monday stocking the wards and left in time before the mayhem started outside. We hear gunfire constantly and distant shouting.

Nights are sleepless. There are community members patrolling. They are our only protection at present. No police are around and most security companies patrolling elsewhere. I'm tempted every day to press our panic button just to see if anyone would come to help us.

It feels like a nightmarish movie. Strangely, my crippling fear about COVID-19 has temporarily dissipated and it's now replaced with this waiting for an attack. We have no access to food or fuel. Businesses everywhere have been looted and burned. Even clinics. It's truly unbelievable. I wish I were exaggerating but it's terrifying. I never knew our lazy suburban life could take a turn like this.

My family and I are safe for now and thankfully have some supplies. But please keep us in your prayers. I pray that you all are safe and healthy."

## There is good news!!

I read with interest of the SAAHIP KwaZulu-Natal Coastal branch's intention to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary by recognising 50 iconic pharmacists for their contributions to the branch, and especially to the profession.

There are great pharmacists all around the country (you're one of them or you wouldn't be reading this!) and it's appropriate to recognise them. Each is an unsung superhero. Thank you for everything you do for your patients, your profession and the country.

**Lorraine Osman**