



Maria (Ria) Jacoba Pretorius

12 September 1957 – 6 March 2022

Ria Pretorius, née Van der Walt, grew up with her three siblings in a farming community and never lost her love of the bushveld. She also remained focussed on family. Her son, Markus, and daughter-in-law, Jess, were the centre of her universe, which included her brother Sarel and sisters Rina and Hettie, as well their families.

After matriculating from Brits High School, she followed in her older brother's footsteps, and like Sarel, obtained a BPharm from the University of Potchefstroom, now North-West University. Throughout her career, Ria remained committed to staying abreast of current professional matters and to developing her management, leadership and clinical skills by completing an impressive list of certificate courses.

After completing her internship in a community pharmacy, Ria worked at Kalafong Hospital in Atteridgeville, Pretoria, for six years. This was followed by two years as a community pharmacy manager in Mthatha, Transkei.

Ria's career in the public sector began in 1991, when she joined COMED, the public sector coordinating body for procurement of medicines and medical supplies at the National Department of Health.

When Ria joined the City of Tshwane four years later, she discovered her true calling and her passion – ensuring that patients obtained good pharmaceutical care at primary health clinics.

As Deputy Director of Pharmaceutical Services for the last 20 years of her career, she put the City of Tshwane on the map regarding the delivery of pharmaceutical services, especially at local government level. Her work and contribution have been recognised nationally, with Tshwane being used many times as a reference for pharmaceutical service delivery, including being a pilot site for the National Health Insurance.

People who have worked under Ria stand out by the way they carry themselves. Ria's discipline, integrity and diligence are characteristics that she imparted to those who work with her. Her mentoring skills were recognised as exceptional. One of her pharmacist's assistants, who was mentored and encouraged by her, is a pharmacist today. Ria was involved through the assistant's journey, from planting the seed for her to go to university, to counselling and guiding and supporting her through family and financial challenges.

Ria contributed significantly to the PSSA, directly through the North Gauteng PSSA Branch and Committee, and through



SAAHIP's Northern Gauteng Branch and Committee. At branch level, she was pivotal in driving transformation in the leadership structure. For example, many years ago, she campaigned for the inclusion of people who felt excluded by the existing language policy of the branch. She was never afraid of challenging the status quo, and was passionate about the need to make all leadership structures, branch and national committees, representative of various groupings, i.e. by age, race, gender and, importantly, professionally. She was passionate about bringing pharmacist's assistants into positions of leadership, as well.

Within SAAHIP, Ria has presented frequently at the annual conference. Her presentations enhanced the image of the pharmacy profession and encouraged many pharmacists in practice to look at things differently and with an inquisitive mind. Numerous pharmacists and pharmacist's assistants found themselves presenting at the SAAHIP conference, when they had thought that they were incapable of public speaking, let alone presenting in front of their colleagues. Her reassuring albeit "gentle forceful" encouragement saw several people grow professionally and in their personal lives.

Ria managed to work behind the scenes and help many people, including very senior people in leadership positions at national SAAHIP and PSSA level, to achieve their full potential in their positions. She was amazed to be given the well-deserved honour of Fellowship of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Africa. Her legacy will live on for years.

SAAHIP and the PSSA extend their sincere condolences to her family, and especially to Markus and Jess.