The annual conference of the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences was hosted at Hunters Rest, Rustenburg, by the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Tshwane University of Technology, from 22 – 26 September 2008.

The theme of this, the 29th annual conference, “Pharmaceutical Sciences: A multidisciplinary approach towards a common goal” is probably the best way to describe the diverse papers and posters presented this year. Each sector of pharmacy, plus a few new related disciplines, was represented by five keynote addresses, 45 podium presentations and 74 posters. A total of 202 delegates participated in what has become the highlight of the year for our many young pharmaceutical scientists. No less than 22 new researchers participated in the Adcock Ingram Young Scientist competition. This year, it was decided to present awards for the best poster in each sector of pharmacy, a practice which will probably continue at future APSSA conferences.

The tone for conference 2008 was set at the Clicks Welcome function held around the swimming pool – fun and informal, but with a serious underpinning of scientific research towards the ultimate goal of improved healthcare for all.

Delegates were formally welcomed by the Chairperson of the Academy, Shirley-Anne Boschmans and Prof Pieter Marais, Dean Faculty of Science, Tshwane University of Technology. Representatives from Clicks, Martin Broodryk and Willie Jordaan, rounded off formalities for the evening by presenting an overview of the company’s vision for the provision of a pharmaceutical service for the community. The DJ then turned up the music, delegates and guests tucked in to a delicious “braai” and the “social sector” of pharmacy took over. It was at this point, on experiencing the noise level, that the organising committee truly realised the wisdom of booking the entire hotel!

On the Tuesday morning, the conference was formally opened by Dr Prins Nevhutalu, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research Innovation and Partnerships of Tshwane University of Technology, followed by a keynote address by Mandisa Hela, Cluster Manager: Pharmaceutical and Related Products, Regulations and Management and Registrar of Medicines. The addresses of the invited speakers were presented at the start of the subsequent sessions. Dr Geneviève Bourdy, an ethnopharmacologist from Lima, Peru, Prof William R Doucette, expert in pharmaceutical socioeconomics and Director of the Centre for Improving Medication Use in The Community at the University of Iowa, Prof Dominique Duchêne, Faculty of Pharmacy, Paris-South University, Prof Simon Gibbons, Professor of Phytochemistry, University of London, Prof Robert Verpoorte, Head of the metabolomics section in the Division of Pharmacognosy at the Leiden University, provided insight into the latest research in their expert disciplines.
A highlight of the programme was the Dr Willmar Schwabe session dedicated to *Pelargonium sidoides* research. Chaired by Dr Carl Albrecht of CANSA, this session dealt with important developments in natural products research from metabolomics and ethnobotany to the impact of the patent amendments act on bioprospecting.

All universities with pharmacy programmes in South Africa contributed to the scientific programme and therefore to the success of a conference of this nature, and information was shared both in a formal and informal manner. Excellence in research was recognised in the form of awards.

### Best Publication Award

- **Best Publication in Pharmacology:** James Syce
  A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of *Lessertia frutescens* in healthy adults
  James Syce

- **Best Publication in Pharmacy Practice:** Martie Lubbe
  Influence of a new reference-based pricing system in South Africa on the prevalence and cost of antidiabetic medicine: a pilot study
  Rianda Steyn, Johanita Riétte Burger, Jan Hendrik Philippus Serfontein and Martha Susanne Lubbe

- **Best Publication in Pharmaceutical Chemistry:** Jacobus Petzer
  Inhibition of monoamine oxidase B by selected benzimidazole and caffeine analogues
  Deidré van den Berg, Kevin R Zoellner, Modupe O Ogunrombi, Sarel F Malan, Gisella Terre’Blanche, Neal Castagnoli, Jr, Jacobus J Bergh and Jacobus P Petzer

- **Best Publication in Pharmaceutics:** Viness Pillay
  Elucidation of the physicochemical and *an initio* quantum energy transitions of a crosslinked PLGA scaffold
  Sibongile R Sibambo, Viness Pillay, Yahya E Choonara, Riaz A Khan and Joe L Sweet

### Young Scientists

Promising Young Scientists were rewarded by the Adcock Ingram Young Scientist Award. The awards were presented by Mr Mike Mabasa during the awards ceremony.

Competition was particularly stiff this year and both first and second places were tied. Achievers in this competition were:

- **First Place:**
  Ilze Vermaak, TUT – The effect of simulated gastrointestinal conditions on the antimicrobial activity and stability of medicinal plant extracts
  Hendrik Lemmer, NWU – S-nitrosylation and its influence on the calcium channel activity of polycyclic cage amines

- **Second Place:**
  Maxleene Sandasi, TUT – The *in vitro* antimicrobial and antibiofilm activity of selected medicinal herbal extracts
  Ulrich Kruger, NWU – A retrospective analysis of the prescribing patterns of isotretinoin

- **Third Place:**
  Joanet Maree, TUT – Development of a quality control protocol for *Pelargonium sidoides* using near infrared spectroscopy (NIRSA)

A special word of thanks to our judges who accepted this important but time-consuming task.

### Let there be Rock

It was largely due to the support of sponsors, exhibitors and contributors that the delegates, after an exhausting day of scientific and intellectual interaction, were able to let their hair down and dispel any myths that scientists are stuffy and boring. Social functions continued into the small hours. On Tuesday evening, after the poster session, an impromptu, open-air dance party materialised. On Wednesday evening delegates were treated to dinner on the Palm Terrace and the show, “Let there be Rock”, at Sun City. It was great to see our scientists, young and old(er), interacting and forging friendships that will hopefully last well into the future and foster co-operation between our institutions for the benefit of research and the promotion of the aims of the Academy.

Even academics know how to party!
The new Executive Committee
The conference was aptly rounded off by the sumptuous banquet sponsored by Aspen Pharmaceuticals and represented by Dr Matthew Worthington. At this gala event, awards were presented and the new executive committee of the Academy announced. Professor Henry Leng of the University of the Western Cape, elected chairperson at the AGM held on the Tuesday evening 22 September, officially accepted the chain of office. Other committee members are Prof Thiru Govender (Deputy Chairperson), Desmond Nazer, Prof Sarel Malan, Gareth Killian, Irene Modipa, Richard Rossiter, and Shirley-Anne Boschmans (immediate past chairperson).

Distinguished Teacher Award
All academics are first and foremost teachers and this is recognised in the Johnson and Johnson Distinguished Teacher Award. The prize for 2008 was presented by Richard Rossiter to Professor Thiru Govender of the University of Kwazulu Natal.

Conference 2008 can definitely be called a great success. Thanks are in order, to each and every one who contributed to this in any way, be it in the organisation of the scientific programme, social programme, sponsorship, presentation or attendance.

Best wishes to the conveners of APSSA conference 2009, North-West University, and the Pharmacology Society, who will jointly host an international conference.