About 15 years ago as young and eager academics we published an article in which we tried to indicate that pharmacy training institutions in close proximity to the pharmaceutical industry have better liaison and thus cooperation with industry, leading to ‘relevant and problem solving’ research which culminated in research publication and thus academic prosperity.

Now, having gained much gray hair and hopefully a little insight, I know that it has nothing to do with physical proximity. The basic idea however, still holds – it is in fact the ‘virtual proximity’ and effective liaison between Academia and Industry that not only leads to but also determines the success of an academic research group and thus institution. This is especially true for the pharmaceutical sciences and also for pharmacy schools in South Africa. The most important aspect for us as researchers and teachers in the pharmaceutical sciences is to define the ‘industry’ relevant to our fields of expertise/research. Though pharmaceutical companies, specifically big Pharma, are still the first group we think of in the domains of pharmaceutics, pharmaceutical/medicinal chemistry and pharmacology, the relevant industry in many cases proves to be the medical aid and managed care industry, the public health ‘industry’ or service providers and of course the education and especially the health education ‘industry’. Many success stories from these associations/cooperation are evident in the South African academic environment.

The Academy would like to build – not only its future, but also that of the pharmaceutical sciences in South Africa – on this effective collaboration between academia and industry. In the light of this, the recent attendance and growing involvement of delegates from the pharmaceutical industry at the annual Academy congress, is encouraging. As the executive committee, we hope to use this as a cornerstone to advance the pharmaceutical sciences for the benefit of our members and the people of South Africa.

My point of view

Prof Sarel Malan
Chairman: Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences