President’s Message

**Etiam capillus unus habet umbram**

“Even one hair has a shadow” – Publilius Syrus

**Johann Kruger**, President: PSSA

Why did we become pharmacists? If one listens to the gripes and moans of our colleagues, I sometimes really wonder what made them become pharmacists in the first place. In an article I found on the internet, some of the questions asked on why to choose pharmacy as a career were:

- Am I a good listener?
- Am I interested in helping people?
- Do I have a strong interest in maths and science?
- Do I care about working in a field that pays top salaries?

If the latter were the sole reason for choosing pharmacy as a career, job fulfilment is unlikely to be achieved, however if all the questions were answered in the affirmative, you are probably one of the lucky people who always walks with a smile on your face! In my own case, I cannot remember a day in my working life that I ever had the thought of “Oh no!! Not another day at work!” Working with people has always fascinated me and trying to make a difference in other people’s lives is probably the biggest reward that one can get!

Pharmacists should play an important role in helping people get the best results from their medications. We know that we are an accessible liaison to whom patients can talk face-to-face, without an appointment. We can answer health-related questions such as what foods, drinks, activities, or other drugs could have an effect on medication or what to do about a missed dose. Essentially, we help people with almost anything related to the use of medicines, which means we help people to stay as healthy as possible. I think pharmacy is a great career choice for the right person – someone who understands and appreciates the responsibilities involved with being a healthcare professional. What is a really great reward is the fact that pharmacists are consistently ranked as some of the most highly trusted professionals because of the important care and health-related services we provide. A 2013 Gallup poll in the US ranked pharmacy second only to nurses as the most honest and ethical profession. The challenge is of course to convince our partners in the healthcare industry that we are in fact critical members of the healthcare team. This would include medical schemes, legislators and employers.

I think one of the most exciting aspects is that it is a dynamic profession, business models change, new medicines appear on the market, indications for the use of such medicines change, the pharmacist’s scope of practice changes and career possibilities change, for example the proposed Authorised Pharmacist Prescriber and pharmacy specialists will have more career paths than are currently available.

A pharmacy degree is essentially the Swiss Army Knife of professional healthcare degrees. These days, there isn’t much you can’t do with a degree in pharmacy. Job insecurity is one worry that the average pharmacist should not have. And the reason for that is that pharmacists are extremely good at multitasking; there is not a pharmacist among us who can’t talk on the phone, type on the computer and eat a slice of cold pizza, all while having a conversation with the pharmacist’s assistant. We can tame printers, wrangle with fax machines, decipher the illegible and visually count to 30 with the blink of an eye. We do this because we have to and because a varied skill set is what being a good pharmacist requires.

This impression of what a pharmacist is capable of has been created by pharmacists themselves – each one does what they are doing in the best possible way, without any advertising campaign or media hype on the wonderful attributes of the pharmacist. In the same way that each hair has a shadow, each one of us has a shadow and although it might not seem to be noteworthy, it is a shadow. The combined effect of individual hairs will cast the shadow of a full head of hair!!! The total of the actions is also more than the sum of the actions of each pharmacist. Let us be proud of what we are doing and try and achieve what we intended doing when we entered pharmacy as a career ... to make a difference in patients lives and improve the health of the nation we live in!

So hopefully you can answer those questions we asked in the beginning whether you have been a pharmacist for five or for fifty years...

- I am a good listener?
- I am interested in helping people?

Do I realise that even one hair has a shadow? So does a single pharmacist. Nothing we do as individual pharmacists is insignificant.

*Sometimes I have to invent an itch to find something to scratch...*