

A Word in your ear



Pharmacist's Assistant shines

I do hope that you read Alet's article carefully. She really is an inspiration, not only to pharmacist's assistants, but also to pharmacists. Since writing her article, she has been named the runner up in

the City of Tshwane Employee of the Year award. Considering the number of people employed by the City of Tshwane, that's quite something.

While it may appear to be quite intimidating, and maybe you and I don't have the same kind of challenges or the same opportunities in our workplaces, I guess the important thing is to be aware of the things that we can actually do. Particularly in health care, the small things that we do can make a huge difference to someone's life.

Council's CPD plans

I recently spoke to a group of pharmacists and pharmacist's assistants about the Pharmacy Council's CPD plans. Next issue, I'll write something more about this so that we can all be ready for 2010, when CPD will become compulsory for everyone registered with Council.

In the meantime, do you know what the plans are? Can you remember what the CPD cycle is? (If you don't, either find our past copies of *SAPA* or visit Council's website, www.sapc.za.org, to refresh your memory.) Do you use *SAPA* to help you with your CPD? (If not, why not?)

Remember that the point of CPD is to develop *your* competence and *your* professional skills. Make the most of it.

Where are the assistants?

After the CPD presentation, we took advantage of the meeting to discuss issues that affected the people present. A pharmacist's assistant asked me a question that I found difficult to answer. The question was, "Why are there no pharmacist's assistants serving on Council?"

What would your answer have been? At first, I thought that we have nine elected and nine appointed pharmacists. No provision for pharmacist's assistants. Then I started thinking more clearly. The Pharmacy Act permits the Minister of Health to appoint four additional people to the Council. One must have specific legal knowledge. So who are these people? They are

not necessarily pharmacists, but in recent times two or three of them have been pharmacists. Why can't at least one be a pharmacist's assistant? Actually, there's no reason whatsoever.

It makes me think that perhaps pharmacist's assistants aren't marketing themselves as professionals who deserve representation on the statutory Council. Perhaps we need to make the powers that be sit up and pay attention.

So there's a challenge – yours and mine. I think we should find some creative ways of proving that pharmacist's assistants can make a valuable contribution to policy development. Let's work on it.

OSD woes

Many pharmacist's assistants work in the public sector. I'm reasonably sure that you're not happy with salaries or recognition or career paths. The Occupation Specific Dispensation for health care workers was meant to deal with this, to a large extent.

As I write, SAAHIP (the South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists) are evaluating the OSD agreement. It doesn't look at this stage as though it adequately addresses salaries or career paths of pharmacist's assistants. SAAHIP, which is a sector of the PSSA, is aware of its responsibilities, however, and will monitor the effect on pharmacist's assistants as well as pharmacists. If you need more information, contact your local SAAHIP branch.

Pharmacy Week 2009

Once again, the PSSA is working with the Department of Health and the Pharmacy Council to develop posters and brochures for use during Pharmacy Week. The Department of Health will send some out, and others can be downloaded from various websites, including those of the PSSA and the Pharmacy Council.

Pharmacy Week 2009 will take place from 7 – 11 September.

Consumers will be asked the important question – do you know how to use, store and dispose of your medicine safely and responsibly?

So to all those creative pharmacist's assistants out there – start planning your Pharmacy Week activities now. Don't forget to take photographs and let us know what you've done – maybe you can be the next star we salute!

Lorraine Osman