in your ear

This final editorial column for 2011 is going to be very short. (I do hope that you didn’t think, “Thank goodness!”)

I know that 2011 has been very difficult for many people. There have been so many pressures and demands made on people that it is sometimes really hard to keep going. But we have. You have. And I’m sure that you’re relieved that the year is over. I am.

Somehow, when we celebrate the New Year, we leave the problems of the old year behind, and we face our challenges with renewed energy. I certainly hope that you are going to experience this.

A new challenge for 2012

I’ll bring you more information next year, but it’s interesting that the three finalists for this year’s National Pharmacist’s Assistant of the Year award were from the Western Cape. There were also outstanding submissions from the Free State, and a couple of entries from other provinces. I just have three questions – we do have more than four provinces in this country, don’t we? And if we do, what happened to nominations from the remaining five provinces? Don’t you find that strange?

My challenge to you is to make 2012 the year that you gain recognition for your professional involvement. You’re doing good work, aren’t you? You can make an even greater contribution, can’t you? You can use your initiative and creativity to make your working environment more effective for the public that you serve, can’t you? I’m absolutely sure the answer to all these questions is, “Yes. We can!”

Whether it is in your community, your workplace, your organisation, your province or nationally, don’t hide your light from the world. Go out there and shine!

Lorraine Osman

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The PSSA/Alpha Pharm clinical education programme 2011 for pharmacy staff

Recognising that consumers frequently encounter front-shop assistants or pharmacist’s assistants before they speak to the pharmacist, the PSSA and Alpha Pharm have launched a new clinical education programme for pharmacy staff. All pharmacy staff need to be familiar with the use of unscheduled medicines and should be reminded of when it is necessary to refer the patient to the pharmacist.

Module 5/2011

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea may be a relatively mild problem in normally healthy people, where it is usually self-limiting, clearing up spontaneously within a few days. It can, however, also be a life-threatening condition in infants, young children and the elderly who may become rapidly dehydrated during a bout of acute diarrhoea. In fact, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), acute diarrhoea is the second leading cause of death in children under the age of five years worldwide. Diarrhoea causes 1.5 to 2 million deaths in children every year. In developing countries, infants may suffer six episodes of diarrhoea every year, leading to possible growth and development problems or a ‘failure to thrive’.

Traveller’s diarrhoea is the most common illness among travellers to any part of the developing world. Although traveller’s diarrhoea is nearly always self-limiting, it can badly affect a long-planned holiday or important business trip.

Besides acute diarrhoeal illnesses as described above, symptoms of diarrhoea may be a side effect of certain medicines, e.g. antibiotics. Diarrhoea can also be a symptom of another underlying disease such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and may require medical evaluation and treatment.

Since the pharmacy is often the first stop for a person suffering from diarrhoea, it is important to establish who the patient is, and the nature and severity of the symptoms so that the front shop staff can understand whether the patient may be treated in the community pharmacy setting or whether the patient requires further medical attention.

This module discusses diarrhoea in patients of various ages ranging from the infant and young child to the adult and the traveller.

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