

A Word in your ear



A new year, a new look **Draft pricing regulations**

Guess what we're all talking about at the moment? Damn, you're good! Of course we're talking about the draft pricing regulations, which have now been published for public comment.

It's still too soon to praise or condemn them – we're still busy testing them and seeing whether or not community pharmacies will still be viable if they come into operation.

It's quite scary that the comment period is very short – it'll be over before you read this – but hopefully all the work will be over by then and it will be possible for informed decisions to be made.

We're certainly looking forward to the day that the pricing issue is resolved and every one can focus on what we're supposed to be doing – providing pharmaceutical services to people who need them.

World Health Day

As I write this, World Health Day is approaching and the one topic that everyone is discussing is the problem of Human Resources.

The theme for this year's World Health Day was "Working Together for Health". I was very interested in the key messages that the World Health Organisation identified:

- Educated, motivated and well-trained health care workers save lives.
- Tackle imbalances and inequities.
- Build trust among all stakeholders.
- Governments must take the lead.
- Support and protect health workers.
- Promote partnership and cooperation.
- Enhance the effectiveness of health workers through new strategies.

How successful is South Africa in this? Do we have the right number of skilled service providers in the right places and at the right times?

If we take each of the key messages and examine them in the light of practice in South Africa, I have

a horrible feeling that we feel short in just about every instance. Except maybe the first statement, that is. I have no doubt whatsoever that educated, motivated and well-trained health care workers save lives.

So I ask you the question – you have obviously been educated as a pharmacist's assistant, but are you motivated and do you consider yourself to be well-trained? I've certainly met well-trained pharmacist's assistant and, strangely enough, they're often the motivated ones too. The problem is that motivation doesn't last if they're don't feel supported and if they're not working in an environment that helps them to use their knowledge and skills optimally.

Human Resources for Health Plan

On World Health Day, the Department of Health is to launch the Human Resources plan, which aims at addressing various challenges facing the country in providing and retaining skilled health workers.

The South African Association of Hospital and Institutional Pharmacists is a sector of the Pharmaceutical Society. When the draft Human Resources planned was published, SAAHIP wrote to the Department of Health, commenting on a number of aspects of the draft plan.

A section that particularly affects pharmacist's assistants dealt with the training of pharmacist's assistants. The document, unfortunately, was incorrect because the details relating to pharmacists and pharmacist's assistants in the final draft HR plan are frequently inaccurate, despite the publication of Regulations relating to pharmacy education and training in 2000.

Both the duration and the location of pharmacist's assistant training were incorrectly stated. The document said that pharmacist's assistants are trained for one year at a university. While it is clearly incorrect, it's an interesting idea. Do you think it would have been more useful to you to have spent a year studying full time at university? Would it have been possible for you to do so? Think about it, and let me know!

Lorraine Osman