

# SADA Head Office - Key issues discussed with the Ministry of Health

SADJ March 2020, Vol. 75 No. 2 p65 - p66

KC Makhubele



On the 28<sup>th</sup> January a SADA delegation made of Prof P Moipolai (*President*), Dr N Osman (*Vice Chairperson*), Mr KC Makhubele (*CEO*) and Mr P Govan (*Head of Legal & Corporate Governance*), had the privilege to meet the Ministry of Health: Hon. Dr. Zweli Mkhize (*Minister of Health*), Hon. Dr. Joe Phaahla (*Deputy Minister of Health*) and Sibusisiwe Magubane-Zulu (*Chief of Staff*).

Some of the key issues that were discussed included the following:

## National Health Insurance (NHI)

1. It was reinforced that SADA and the other stakeholders in oral healthcare were committed to contributing meaningfully to the aims and objectives of NHI. Although SADA fully supported and expressed commitment to the proposed NHI, we were concerned that the Green Paper, White Paper and even the NHI Bill (2019) made little or no mention of oral health.
2. SADA, together with professional associations representing dental therapists, oral hygienists, dental assistants, and dental technicians advised the meeting that a joint submission together with the academic institutions was made on the proposed contribution that key oral health players are able to make to NHI.
3. The role of the dentist and dental specialist in the NHI environment was highlighted, and we made a point that this required further discussion. The role of the dentist in the public service provision was also highlighted, and was reinforced by indicating that that early detection and prevention in oral healthcare contributes to overall health.
4. SADA would like to see proper integration of dentists in primary healthcare systems and facilities as envisaged in the NHI. To this end we are willing to assist in the formulation of clinical protocols and guidelines with the Benefit Advisory Committee. Keeping this in mind, SADA also raised key concerns around the Certificate of Need.
5. It was appreciated that key information and details would be made available in the regulations and when the work of the establishment of the Fund was completed.

6. The Hon. Minister expressed his encouragement by our support and urged SADA to continue to make submissions and contribute to protocols and guidelines when called upon to do so. In addition, he suggested that SADA reinforce its support for NHI on television interviews and radio slots.
7. We indicated the need for the decision- and policy-makers to properly engage our profession with the need for formal meetings with the minister. The Hon. Minister responded by saying that he would like SADA to engage with the Ministry on all matters relating to oral health, and that he is committed to ensure the obviating of the feeling that Oral health is neglected by the ministry and sub-structures.

He indicated that, as he meets with SAMA, he wants to have a similar relationship with SADA, and expressed appreciation that we have taken the step to meet and engage with the ministry.



## Invitation to 2020 SADA Congress

1. During our meeting it was mentioned that the Deputy Director General for Health, Dr Anban Pillay, was kind enough to attend the 2019 Congress and present on the NHI which was most useful.
2. The CEO extended an invitation to the Minister of Health to attend the 2020 Congress, which will only serve to infuse and encourage oral health care workers and the industry.
3. The Hon. Minister indicated a commitment, with time willing, to attend, or at least to send a delegate from the Department of Health. The CEO undertook to send a formal invitation for the Minister's office to diarise.

### Challenges facing Community Service for dentists

1. The present difficulties of dental graduates in finding community service posts was highlighted as a pressing issue. In addition, many of the facilities that these dentists were assigned to, did not have proper equipment or materials and, as a result, they were carrying out extractions predominantly without providing restorative or rehabilitative services.
2. In some cases, these community service members were unsupervised. As these dentists were carrying out limited procedures there was a loss of clinical skills and dexterity.

SADA proposed that the Department consider permitting community service to be performed in private establishments in addition to the public sector. That a similar project is presently run by the Pharmacy Council.

3. The Hon. Minister was encouraged by these proposals but express concerns about access of the public to these services, remuneration, and materials.
4. The Hon. Minister showed concern about the lack of funded posts and suggested that an urgent submission must be made to him, with concrete proposals and suggestions to remedy the current state of affairs. That this issue then be brought up for urgent discussion to find a solution to this problem.



### Challenges created by the Radiation Licensing and Testing regulations

1. SADA highlighted the present problems experienced by dentists who require licensing of their radiographic and imaging equipment. Although a lack of personnel is a factor, this is exacerbated when new practices are opened or when equipment is being replaced, when due to these licensing delays, practitioners are prejudiced and compromised in the treatment of their patients.
2. It was also highlighted that the legal process followed when introducing regulations for compulsory testing of radiographic and imaging equipment owned and operated by dental professionals was flawed, as the radiation doses were minimal and was not considered by those drafting these regulations.

3. SADA would like the ministry to regularly engage the profession and reevaluate the need for such regulatory provision with an intent to set aside and if need be re-starting the process.
4. The Minister was not aware of this and suggested that proposals be presented.



### The motivation for a separate Regulatory Council

1. The CEO touched on the Commission (Ministerial Task Team) investigating the HPCSA and the efficiency of the regulatory body in its mandate of guiding the profession.
2. We also mentioned that discussions were held with the former Minister and SAMA when proposals were made for the Ministry to consider establishment of a separate regulatory council for doctors and dentists.

The Hon. Minister indicated he was aware of this matter. He indicated that SADA and SAMA should submit a joint proposal for him to evaluate. SADA indicated that their stance is to support the recommendation made by the Ministerial Task Team for a separate council looking after the needs of dentists and medics.

3. SADA indicated that, together with SAMA, we would seek another meeting to discuss the issue of the separate Council.

We are expecting further meetings with the ministry in the future and will communicate our progress and any further developments in these matters to you, our members, timeously.