

# SAJS

## News

### Cell phones and surgery

In August 2009 a local newspaper carried a report in which the alleged use of a cell phone by a surgeon during surgery was slated as 'unethical and unprofessional' by a Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) spokesperson and culprits were warned they would face immediate disciplinary action.

Subsequently, however, the Executive Committee of the Medical and Dental Professions Board has reviewed this report, and has resolved that surgeons be allowed to use their cell phones when a need arises during the operation of a patient. Further, cell phones may be used at the discretion of surgeons in the best and most efficient way so as not to compromise the patient.

[www.hpcsa.co.za](http://www.hpcsa.co.za)

### ASSA – the way forward

The ASSA held a strategic meeting at Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre in Johannesburg on 21 November 2009. The meeting was chaired by Prof. Martin Veller, chairman of ASSA, and dealt with among other things the challenges facing ASSA and its members.

Emerging out of this was the establishment of a number of subgroups of Exco members, which have been assigned specific roles going forward. The groups are as follows:

#### Steering Subcommittee

Prof. S. Pillay	President
Prof. M. Veller	Chairman
Prof. B. Warren	Vice-chairman
Dr I. Buccimazza	Treasurer
Dr Z. Koto	Secretary

Primary objectives: Membership, administration and secretarial function, finances, communication (internal and external), liaison with professional and statutory organisations.

### General Surge on Advocacy and Lobby Subcommittee

Prof. L. Mazwai	Co-chairman
Prof. S. Pillay	Co-chairman
Dr M. Wellstead	Co-opted
Dr Wonga Matshoba	Co-opted

Primary objectives: Develop ASSA's influence at government and other levels, give ASSA legitimacy (who we represent, what we represent, etc.), communication with official structures (HPCSA, DoH, etc.), monitor and respond to external factors affecting general surgery, SAMA.

### Academic and Scientific Subcommittee

Prof. M. Smith	Chairman
Prof. D. Kahn	COS
Prof. J. Krige	Editor SAJS
Prof. D. Bizos	Co-opted
Dr M. Brand	SASSiT representative

Primary objectives: Congresses of ASSA, guidelines, programmes and interaction with other societies regarding congresses, *South African Journal of Surgery*, surgical research, training issues, data collection.

### Patient Advocacy Subcommittee

Dr T. Luvenga	Chairman
Dr T. Ngcobo	Co-opted
Dr M. Klippin	Co-opted

Primary objectives: Reduce surgical disease burden, patient information and communication.

### Professional Standards Subcommittee

Dr E. Panieri	Chairman
Dr E. Loots	Co-opted
Dr T. Hardcastle	Co-opted
Dr J. Leith	Co-opted

Primary objectives: Peer review, accreditation and credentialing, advising on and management of professional infringements (e.g. ICU care), effect of other specialties on general surgery (e.g. anaesthesia, training of family physicians, etc.),

promotion of effective and cost-effective surgery.

### International Relations and Outreach Subcommittee

Prof. K. Boffard	Chairman
Prof. P. Goldberg	Co-opted
Dr K. Baatjies	Co-opted

Primary objectives: International Surgical Society, relationship with international surgical societies (e.g. ASGBI), PAAS, outreach into Africa.

[www.assa.co.za](http://www.assa.co.za)

### Surgical registrar society established

The South African Society of Surgeons in Training (SASSiT) was established on 24 October 2009 as a new association to address the concerns of surgical registrars, among which training and mentoring are of major concern. The SASSiT is affiliated to the ASSA.

Dr Martin Brand, senior surgical registrar at Wits, was elected as chairman, and Dr Sarah Asbury, also a senior surgical registrar at Wits, is the secretary.

The Society has also published the first edition of its official quarterly e-Dispatch, *The Needleholder*. This 12-page publication, edited by Dr Bradley David, surgical registrar at UCT, contains a wealth of interesting and informative reading, including the first instalment of a biographical guide to the surgical tray featuring Sir Harold Gillies, an esoteric article on the literary surgeon by Prof. G.J. Oettle, and an article on the management of the obstructed colon, while for even more leisurely activity there is the 'gut twister' crossword.

Future issues of *The Needleholder* will focus on transplant (April), minimally invasive surgery (July) and vascular surgery (October).

[www.sassit.co.za](http://www.sassit.co.za)