

ASSA News

Dear ASSA members

Following discussions at the last few executive committee member meetings, we have noted the poor communication from our side with our members. As the sitting chairperson I apologise on behalf of the executive committee. The art of balancing multiple responsibilities continues to elude me. We aim, in future, to have a paragraph informing our members of relevant news in each issue of the SAJS.

I would like to urge all members of the Surgical community to attend the ASSA/SAGES Congress taking place in Port Elizabeth on 5 – 8 August 2017. Professor Zach Koto and his team at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, the LOC, in conjunction with Dr Ernst Fredericks and Karin Fenton from SAGES, have put together a programme that caters for the emerging trends in the academic and private practice that are relevant to us all.

I would like to thank the outgoing executive committee for their efforts and support over the last two-year tenure. A consistent reflection by all new Exco members is the value and importance of ASSA as a representative body for the profession.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the aims of ASSA. It is with these aims in mind that the structure and content of the biennial ASSA congress is modelled:

1. To promote the science, practice, quality, and image of surgery.
2. To represent and further the interests of surgeons in South Africa.
3. To sponsor and promote a scientific publication in the field of surgery.
4. To encourage and support surgical research in South Africa.

That being said ASSA is not excluded from the societal, political, and financial challenges that face our country. Like with so many issues in South Africa there are episodes of unbridled promise interspersed with moments of dejection.

Most of the eight Academic Departments of Surgery have to balance the triad of training, research, and service delivery with a shrinking budget and increasing staff constraints. Several have lost some specialty accreditation from the HPCSA. General surgery and the various subspecialties have thus far been spared, however, the trend is concerning.

We welcome and support the recommendations of the report on the Ministerial Task Team on the functioning of the HPCSA. In particular the re-establishment of a separate Medical and Dental board is a continuing priority.

The HPCSA has taken the position of recommending that practitioners do not sign up to agreements for Global Fees. This is, however, a reflection of the decreasing income and increasing demand in both the private and public healthcare environments, and will without doubt be revisited in the near future. The ramifications of the most recent iteration of the White Paper on NHI remain to be seen. We as surgeons are very well aware of the healthcare needs of our country, and also of the strengths and needs of the present systems.

The Executive committee of ASSA have, in the last two years, engaged in the surgical landscape within South Africa with the aim of representing the profession.

I would like to formally thank all the editorial staff of the SAJS, and in particular Prof Jake Krige (who has been the editorial chair since 2007), for their roles in the publication of the official journal of ASSA.

Finally, a word of thanks to all the members of ASSA who contribute positively and in multiple unacknowledged ways to ASSA, the profession, and society in general.

Regards,
Mike Klipin
ASSA Chairperson