SAPA News

As the season changes and the flowers once again bloom, the third quarter of 2026 has proven to be as rewarding and stimulating as ever for South African paediatrics. Our community continues to juggle clinical care while providing quality teaching and mentorship, producing excellent research, ensuring patient advocacy and striving for professional development.

National conferences and educational meetings have provided essential opportunities to learn, while important child health awareness campaigns have reminded us of the importance of maintaining a community-based focus.

Wits UpToSPAED 2026

Wits UpToSPAED 2026, held from 31 July to 2 August at The Wanderers Club in Johannesburg, was an engaging event that brought together paediatricians from across the country.

This three-day workshop focused on practical and clinically relevant learning. Topics ranged from neonatology and paediatric critical care to dermatology, rheumatology, infectious diseases, short stature and hydronephrosis. An invaluable component of the conference was the hands-on workshops in vascular access and point-of-care ultrasound.

Meetings such as UpToSPAED are invaluable to our community, not only ensuring that our clinical skills and knowledge remain at the forefront, but also allowing us to set aside time to reconnect and engage with colleagues from across the country.



USANA 2026

Misty Hills in Muldersdrift, Johannesburg, provided an idyllic backdrop for the 7th Biennial USANA Conference, held from 3–6 September.

The programme focused on developments in the care of newborns and children and brought together neonatologists from across the country. A diverse range of educational talks and poster presentations, hands-on workshops and an engaging trade symposium made this a truly varied event.

International speakers from the USA, UK and Zimbabwe joined a list of esteemed local speakers, allowing for stimulating discussions and perspectives from across the globe.





PANDA-SA

The Paediatric Neurology and Developmental Association of Southern Africa (PANDA-SA) continued to highlight the importance of multidisciplinary approaches to child development and neurological health. The meeting was held in Cape Town, with content covering a wide spectrum of clinically relevant material.

The complexities of paediatric neurological and developmental disorders were discussed in a forum that fostered collaboration between professionals working across different disciplines. With paediatric neurology and neurodevelopmental services continuing to face significant demands, platforms such as these are essential for knowledge sharing, strengthening networks and optimising support for children and their families.





HAMBA NAWE PAEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE CONFERENCE

Our first Hamba Nawe Paediatric Palliative Care Conference brought together a wonderfully diverse multidisciplinary group with one shared purpose: to improve the care of children and families facing serious illness. Guided by the theme "Start where you are", the two days were filled with practical learning, honest conversations, new connections and renewed hope.

More than anything, we were reminded that paediatric palliative care does not always begin with a perfect service or a big team – it begins with seeing the child and family in front of you, asking what matters most and choosing to make a difference from exactly where you are.









CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month is an important event in the paediatric space, providing an opportunity for clinicians and allied health professionals to highlight the importance of early recognition, timely referral and appropriate access to treatment.

Local initiatives such as the 'Run for a Reason' campaign from the Rainbows and Smiles Foundation provided a fun opportunity for people to get active, donate and support those going through this incredibly difficult journey. Groups such as CHOC have also been instrumental in providing support and increasing awareness through their social media platforms.

This month also provided an opportunity to recognise the multidisciplinary teams who care for children with cancer, with paediatric oncologists, surgeons and radiologists, nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, psychologists and

WORLD BREASTFEEDING WEEK

"Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthen What Works" – this was the slogan for World Breastfeeding Week, held from 1–7 August.

The 2026 campaign turned its focus to strengthening proven interventions that support breastfeeding. These included skilled counselling, Baby-Friendly Hospital practices, community support and breastfeeding-friendly workplace policies.

The theme was a useful reminder that interventions do not always need to be novel; rather, we need to leverage the skills, knowledge and foundations that we have already established. We should continue to advocate for and empower women to care for their newborns by making use of the resources, clinicians and facilities that are already available to us.



SAPA IN ACTION

SAPA is committed to supporting paediatricians throughout South Africa at all stages of their careers. It remains committed to mentorship, education and collaboration.

The SAPA Junior Doctor Mentorship Programme has continued throughout 2026, allowing junior doctors to engage with experienced members of the field and receive invaluable advice on professional development, academia and career trajectories.

SAPA committees have also remained active across a range of areas, including adolescent health, climate change, screen time, education and communications. These initiatives focus not only on clinical care, but also on a wide spectrum of issues that are extremely pertinent to the paediatric community as a whole.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we approach the final quarter of 2026, we aim to end the year with the same energy with which we began, fuelled by the motivation that comes from nine months of hard work. The commitment within South African paediatrics is evident, with colleagues continuing to learn, teach, conduct research and advocate for children despite the numerous challenges we face and the demanding nature of our work.

Thank you to all our members for the contribution you make every day to the health and wellbeing of children and families. We look forward to ending the year with continued learning, connection and collaboration across our paediatric community.

Dr Shaista Kalidas, on behalf of SAPA