

# Empowering the future of dentistry: SADA Dental & Oral Health Congress and Exhibition 2024

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Mr KC Makhubele – CEO, South African Dental Association

The SADA Dental & Oral Health Congress and Exhibition 2024, held at the SunBet Arena, Time Square, Pretoria stood as a beacon of progress and innovation within the dental field. Gathering a record-breaking 714 delegates, this year's event marked a pivotal moment for South Africa's dental professionals, fostering an inspiring environment for learning, collaboration and celebration of excellence.

## Elevating standards through education

Education took centre stage at this year's conference, with a dynamic mix of hands-on workshops, seminars and thought-provoking lectures. The programme offered 19 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for full attendance, underscoring SADA's dedication to professional development and the continued pursuit of excellence in dentistry. By combining 19 clinical CEUs with 10 ethical CEUs, the conference encouraged delegates not only to sharpen their technical skills but also to uphold the highest ethical standards in practice.

The event's schedule was robust and meticulously crafted, featuring 37 sessions over three days:

- **Friday:** 11 sessions focusing on practical and ethical challenges in modern dentistry.
- **Saturday:** 7 sessions, emphasising the integration of emerging technologies and techniques.
- **Sunday:** 19 sessions, capped by an engaging "Women in Dentistry" forum.

Each session was designed to arm professionals with new skills and insights, empowering them to lead their practices confidently into the future. Delegates also had access to 15 hands-on workshops, led by a team of 65 expert presenters – including 13 international leaders in dental innovation. These workshops provided invaluable opportunities for immersive learning, allowing participants to practice new techniques and integrate the latest technologies into their repertoire.

## Innovation and technology on display

In an age of rapid technological advancement, the conference highlighted how innovation is transforming dental practices and patient care. The exhibition hall was a testament to this progress, bringing together 75 companies across 109 stands to showcase groundbreaking products and techniques. A dedicated German Pavilion featured 10 leading companies, offering delegates a global perspective on cutting-edge dental tools, materials and software solutions.

Notable societal organisations such as the South African Association of Paediatric Dentistry (SAAPD), Oral Hygienists Association of South Africa (OHASA) and European Association for Osseointegration (EAO) also had a presence, providing attendees with the latest research and developments in their respective fields. The exhibition not only served as a marketplace but as a vital educational hub where delegates could explore how new technologies could directly benefit their patients and practices.

## A community united in excellence

The highlight of Sunday's programme was the "Women in Dentistry" session, which drew an impressive crowd of 100 delegates. This session celebrated the contributions of women in dentistry and provided an open platform for discussing the unique challenges they face in the field. This celebration of diversity and empowerment was a cornerstone of the conference, reinforcing SADA's commitment to inclusivity and excellence.

Specialist groups such as APSA, SASPIO, SASMFOS and SASO lent their expertise and support, further enriching the event. Allied groups, including DENTASA, OHASA and SADTA, added their voices, fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual growth that underscored the unity of South Africa's dental community.

## Honouring excellence in the field

The conference culminated in an elegant Gala Dinner where attendees, including 190 students from leading universities such as UP, SMU and Wits, gathered to celebrate outstanding achievements across the industry. The awards ceremony was a highlight, recognising excellence, innovation and dedication within the dental field:

**Top Student Achiever Awards:** 4 awards celebrating the next generation of dental professionals.

**University of the Western Cape** – Dr Reinette Van Der Merwe; **University of Pretoria** – Dr Femke Swanepoel; **University of the Witwatersrand** – Dr Sujee Ammaarah; **Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University** – Dr Yolandi Malan.

## Trade awards:

**Trader of the Year 2023:** Colgate, recognised for its outstanding contributions to the dental industry. **1st Runner-Up:** Wright Millners, **2nd Runner-Up:** Henry Schein Dental Warehouse.

## Dental Industry Innovation Awards:

**Winner:** Colgate, for its pioneering work in advancing dental care technologies. **1st Runner-Up:** Wright Millners, **2nd Runner-Up:** Dentsply Sirona. **Distinguished Professional Awards:** **Dental Trade Professional of 2023:** Terry Greyling, for his exemplary service to the industry. **Dento-Legal Advisor of 2023:** Dr Alasdair McKelvie, for his leadership in upholding ethical standards in dentistry.

## Young Dentists Council Publisher Award 2023

Dr Mokgadi Nkosi – Department of Health.

## A lasting impact

The 2024 SADA annual conference has once again proven to be an essential event, bringing together the best minds in South African dentistry to explore the forefront of dental education, innovation and professional practice. As SADA continues its mission to advance the dental profession, this conference stands as a powerful reminder of the collective expertise and shared vision that drives the future of dentistry in South Africa.