

# Continuing to Elevate the Standard: SADA Congress 2025 and the Ongoing Development of Oral Healthcare Practitioners

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Mr KC Makhubele – CEO, South African Dental Association

Each year, the South African Dental Association (SADA) renews its commitment to advancing the profession and elevating oral healthcare in South Africa. The *2025 SADA Dental and Oral Health Congress & Exhibition*, held in Durban, delivered emphatically on that promise. With *836 attendees*, including *536 delegates*, *216 exhibitors*, and *40 speakers*, it stood as a national beacon of professional development, networking, and inspiration.

This year's Congress theme aligned with – *"Reimagining the Future of Oral Health"* – was more than a title. It was a call to action, one which every contributor, partner, and delegate answered with purpose and passion.

## A Scientific Programme Rooted in Excellence

The *SADA Scientific Advisory Committee* must be commended for assembling a robust and dynamic educational programme. From cutting-edge clinical updates to ethics, technology integration, and practice sustainability, the CPD-accredited content was carefully curated to address the real-world needs of dental professionals.

The lineup of 40 distinguished local and international speakers reflected SADA's continued commitment to inclusivity, gender balance, and academic excellence. Delegates walked away with practical tools, renewed insight, and a sharpened professional edge.

Workshops, discussion panels, and live demonstrations provided engaging, interactive learning experiences beyond the lecture hall, giving all attendees – from students to specialists – opportunities to grow and collaborate.

## A Night to Remember: The 2025 SADA Gala Dinner

Among the standout moments of the Congress was the *SADA Gala Dinner*, held on *26 July 2025* at the Hilton Hotel Ballroom. Masterfully hosted by *Mr KC Makhubele*, the evening was a rich blend of recognition, entertainment, and unity.

Guests were welcomed with live music by *Kirsty on Sax*, followed by opening addresses from the SADA CEO and *SADA President Dr Paul Mathai*. The night honoured





excellence at every level of the profession:

#### Student Awards 2024

Dr Aiden Schlome – University of Pretoria  
 Dr Marguerite Brussow – University of the Witwatersrand  
 Dr Shazeea Rawoot – University of the Western Cape  
 Dr Charl Marais – University of the Western Cape

#### Young Publisher Competition Awards

These awards recognise research excellence among professionals under 35:

#### Undergraduate Research Award

Mrs Bibi Dalvie, Sibiyi Bata, and Mr Tshepang Lenkoe

#### Postgraduate & Non-Degree Research

Dr Steve Swanepoel (Runner-up), Dr Danica Smit (Winner)  
 The winners received trophies, certificates, and cash prizes, with their work set to be featured in future editions of the

#### SADJ.

#### Professional Recognition Awards

The SADA Meritorious Service Award, Service Excellence Award, and the prestigious SADA Premier Award celebrated long-standing dedication and service to the profession:

#### Meritorious Service Recipients:

Dr Vinay Amaidas  
 Dr Rhonin Naidoo  
 Dr Vivesh Rughubar  
 Dr Barry Beilinson

#### Service Excellence Award:

Dr Arnil Kisson

#### SADA Premier Award:

Dr Roux Vermeulen

#### Distinguished Dental Trade Professional Award:

Mrs Ingrid de Klerk, for over two decades of service with Colgate-Palmolive

The ceremony closed with *Long Service Awards* for Ann Bayman (30 years) and Punkaj Govan (28 years), a *Best Stand Award*, followed by dessert and a vibrant dancefloor hosted by a DJ. The event concluded at midnight – a fitting celebration for a milestone occasion.

#### Leadership in Action

The presence of SADA Board Members throughout the Congress – particularly Chairperson Dr Francois Meyer and President Dr Paul Mathai – was a visible and meaningful demonstration of leadership and solidarity. Their adaptability as the Congress programme evolved, and their direct engagement with stakeholders, exhibitors, and delegates, reaffirmed SADA's values in practice.

Their support was pivotal in fostering the professional tone and high standards observed throughout the event.

#### Looking Forward

As we reflect on the 2025 Congress, we are both humbled and energised. Challenges – such as those presented by logistical constraints and coordination with SADTO – were met head-on with resilience and professionalism. The results speak for themselves: a well-executed, future-focused gathering that reinforced the essential role of continued learning in our field.

We will release a detailed Congress report in due course, including attendance breakdowns, feedback, and strategic insights.

#### A Profession Reimagined

SADA's mission remains clear: to *advance the dental profession* through visionary leadership, collaborative growth, and excellence in education. The 2025 Congress demonstrated that we are not just keeping pace with change – we are helping to shape it.

Here's to 2026 – and to continuing the journey of lifelong learning, together.