



SASOHN News

SAILING THE SEVEN C's

After 14 months of intense planning, the 12-member organising committee from SASOHN Eastern Cape was pleased with the outcome of the 2016 annual SASOHN conference, receiving extremely positive feedback from delegates and exhibitors alike. Thirty exhibitors promoted their products/services and delegates were treated to numerous useful handouts from these generous exhibitors.

The conference theme was based on topics relevant to occupational health, and embraced the geographical location – close to the sea – with each presentation title beginning with a C. Delegates were afforded the opportunity to gain practical and relevant knowledge which they could implement in their occupational health services. As has become tradition, the conference was preceded by three professional pre-conference workshops which were booked to capacity.

Workshop 1: Critical Care – Medical Emergencies in the Workplace was presented by Dr Leeching, an Emergency Medical Practitioner who focused on skills such as being prepared, knowing the red flag signs and symptoms, as well as life-and limb-saving interventions. Response to a medical emergency begins before the event through effective preparation, including policies, procedures, training, sourcing of equipment and risk identification, and the occupational health nursing practitioner (OHNP) needs to be involved in all stages of preparation.

Workshop 2: Competency in Risk Assessment – a detailed and informative presentation on risk assessment methodology, including the assessment of existing control measures and the need for ongoing reviews, was presented by Michael Erasmus, SHE Specialist from Aspen Pharmaceuticals. Mike described the

development of occupational risk exposure profiling (OREP) in an organisation and how it uses occupational categories to define the task capability requirements.

Workshop 3: Compliance – Substance Abuse Policy Processes were jointly presented by Prof. Tim Laurens, Pretoria University, and Advocate Terry Senya. A valuable workshop provided delegates with food for thought regarding workplace drug testing. Currently, there are no statutory guidelines for workplace testing, but the HPCSA has compiled ethical guidelines. It is essential to have a legally correct policy in place which applies to all employee levels (top management included). Prof. Laurens emphasised that off-duty use of drugs can result in on-duty impairment and also provided information on specimen collection processes and how test results can be invalidated. Advocate Senya discussed the direct and indirect cost implications of substance abuse to employers and emphasised that policies must be jointly created between labour and management.

Jenny Serfontein opened the conference sessions with a reflection on how OHNPs need to present themselves as competent managers, demonstrating cost control in all areas of the clinic services. Consideration needs to be given to all direct and indirect costs when formulating a meaningful budget in order to ensure delivery of an efficient and cost effective service. The role of the chiropractor in occupational health was presented by Dr James Vlok who clarified why chiropractic is not just about 'ruk en pluk'. In many cases, workers with musculo-skeletal problems are not adequately assessed for causative factors, resulting in the application of ineffective treatment regimes. Frequently, these cases are treated with medication (e.g. opiates), based on presenting symptoms rather than the underlying cause. A



SASOHN 2016 organising committee with the new SASOHN President, Denise Minnie



Petro de Beer awarded the Journal Article of the Year Award by Kim Davies

random trial conducted over 52 weeks on 183 patients with neck pain demonstrated that subjects who received manual therapy as opposed to physiotherapy or general practitioner visits had the fastest recovery rate and incurred 1/3 of the costs of the other two categories.

Other presentations included Dr Emil Goosen, an ophthalmologist, who emphasised the need to refer all workers with blunt force trauma to the eye/s to a medical officer to review for other possible related injuries, and thereafter to an ophthalmologist for specialist management of the eye injury. The correct procedures for the collection and transport of biological specimens was explained by Lisa Liebenberg from Ampath Laboratories. This included what specimens to collect (urine, stool, blood, sputum, etc.) and reasons why many specimens are rejected when they reach the laboratory. Prof. Elna McIntosh, when speaking on contraception, stated that dual contraception is the method of choice, i.e. two methods are better than one. Dr De Koker explained that the focus of correct eating should be on the nutritional value of food for optimal metabolism rather than calorie counting. Calories are tiny creatures that live in your closet and sew your clothes a little tighter at night!

The annual conference is not just a time for professional development but also an opportunity to recognise the excellence within the occupational health nursing fraternity, and this year was no exception. The Occupational Health Nurse of the Year floating trophy was awarded to Agnes Ramodipa for excellence



Agnes Ramodipa awarded the floating trophy for the OHYNP of the year 2016 by Kim Davies

in delivery of an occupational health service. It is noteworthy that nominees are audited, and are only eligible for consideration if they score in excess of 90% in an independent audit. The award for the best article submitted to *Occupational Health Southern Africa* for the period July 2015 to June 2016 was awarded to Petro de Beer for her article, 'Assessment of musculoskeletal disorders and absenteeism'. The West Rand branch was named as the region of the year for its commitment to the development of its members and the contribution made to SASOHN activities through the year. Congratulations to all winners.

2016 was also a bitter sweet year as Kim Davies, the outgoing SASOHN President, handed over the office to the incumbent Denise Minnie. Kim has worked tirelessly over the past four years to further the professional recognition of the OHNP, often under trying circumstances, as well as the promotion of occupational health in South Africa. Kim – a sincere vote of appreciation is extended to you on behalf of all SASOHN members. Denise has taken office for the period 2017 and 2018 and is wished success in this new venture with the knowledge that she has the support of the entire organisation.

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Information provided by SASOHN Eastern Cape



Kim Davies handing over the SASOHN presidency to Denise Minnie



Dorothy Blacklaws and Christine Schumane – SASOHN honorary life members – at the dinner