



20th Annual Congress of the MMPA

The Mine Medical Professionals Association (MMPA) and the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC) held their 20th Annual Congress from 12 to 14 October 2017, at the Bon Hotel Riviera on the scenic Vaal River in Vereeniging.

Several medical and mine health and safety professionals descended on the quiet town of Vereeniging over the weekend. There were approximately 60 people in attendance which was quite an increase from the previous year's number. The theme of this year's Congress was 'Getting back to basics'.

After the welcome note by the MMPA President, Dr Nothando Moyo-Mubayiwa, the CEO of the Chamber of Mines, Mr R Baxter, set the pace for the congress. As evidenced by all the talks, presentations and panel discussions, not only is occupational health becoming more complex, but there are many developments in the field in terms of legal and operational requirements.

To quote from one of the presentations during the congress, "It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold and silver."
– Mahatma Gandhi

The topics covered during the congress on the first day were a mix of detail, insight and guidelines around occupational

health, legislation, employee wellness in mining, and mental health and rehabilitation.

Mr Karl Blom of Webber Wentzel spoke about the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) and 'The implications for managing occupational health in the workplace.' Prof. Gill Nelson gave insight into the *Occupational Health Southern Africa* Journal and the need for the occupational medical practitioners to publish research and other articles. Dr Nikki Connellian, an ICAS representative, was on hand to share information on approaches to employee wellness in the mining industry. Ms Nkhesani Masekoa from the MHSC shared the great strides made by the MHSC Centre of Excellence and requested mines to highlight topics of interest that they need the MHSC to research.

The issue of dust emissions in mines has been topical for as long as mines have been around. Prof. Mary Gulumian, from the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), presented on the research findings of the adverse health impacts associated with dust emissions from gold mine tailings.

Mr Mokhonoana took the delegates through the shortfalls of the current risk-based emergency care code of practice. This is being reworked and will be published soon.

After an intense first day at the congress, there was a gala dinner, with the highlight of the evening being a talk by motivational speaker, Myan Subrayan, who challenged the delegates to change their narrative and think positively.

The last day of the Congress was not as hectic as the first day, but there was just as much insight. The focus shifted to occupational diseases, workplace drug testing, mine deaths, and comprehensive occupational health management in the mining industry.

The issues covered included occupational diseases covered by the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA). Ethical drug testing is critical in the workplace. Dr Tim Laurens spoke about this in some detail. Dr Dipalesa Mokoboto gave a guidance note on medical-legal investigations of mine deaths. Dr Lindiwe Ndelu from the DMR then delved into 2016/17 statistics for the mining industry.

To round off the second day, the Chamber of Mines was on hand to articulate its response to key health issues and to share occupational health milestones achieved thus far. Dr Muofhe Murwamphida finished off with closing remarks on the successful congress.

A very big thank you to the sponsors who made the event possible, the Chamber of Mines, and the MHSC. We are looking forward to a bigger and better MMPA congress next year – preparations are already underway!



From L to R: The MMPA President (Dr Nothando Moyo-Mubayiwa), Manager: Mines Professional Association Secretariat (Raymond van der Berg), and the MMPA Vice President (Dr Muofhe Murwamphida)

Photograph: Mines Professional Association Secretariat (MPAS)



MMPA attendees

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