

# Looking back on 2017



**A**s 2017 draws to a close, this report reflects on some of the meetings and events that The South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) organised or in which members were involved since November 2016.

## NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The National Executive Committee met on 25 November 2016, 21 February 2017, and 8 June 2017, and will meet again on 24 November 2017. The office bearers are Prof. Daan Kocks (Chairman), Dr Andre Kotze (Vice Chairman), Dr Jenny Sapire (Secretary) and Dr Adriaan Combrinck (Treasurer), all of whom represented SASOM at meetings and conferences at home and abroad.

## CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

The 2016 Annual General Meeting and Conference took place on 26 November 2016 at the Glenburn Lodge in Muldersdrift. Honorary life membership was bestowed on Dr Frank Fox and Prof. Mary Ross, in recognition of their valuable contributions to occupational health disciplines over many years.

The SASOM Annual Congress on 9 and 10 June 2017 at the Protea Hotel by Marriott, OR Tambo Airport, in Kempton Park was well attended by occupational medicine and nursing practitioners who appreciated the varied and interesting presentations, which included some by members of the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) and the South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN). A meeting of the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH) National Secretaries from Korea, Senegal and Zimbabwe, together with Dr Adriaan Combrinck from South Africa, was held during the Congress.

The Department of Labour (DoL) organised a workshop to discuss the amendment of the Regulations for Hazardous Biological Agents of 2001, on 29 June 2017. Prof. Mary Ross presented a paper on 'Medical surveillance for employees exposed to biological agents'. SASOM sponsored Dr Bart Willems to attend the workshop; he warned that the TB epidemic was a dire threat to vulnerable healthcare workers.

SASOM sponsored two seminars held at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Public Health. On 17 July 2017, Prof. Tom Fuller from the Illinois State University, USA presented two papers: 'Global issues in occupational health and safety' and 'Innovations in industrial hygiene approaches to infection control'. On 4 September 2017, Olaf Kvaløy from SINTEF Digital Acoustics in Norway gave an overview of the wireless intelligent hearing protection device developed by SINTEF, and the results of a pilot study undertaken at a mine in South Africa.

A report on the SASOM AGM and Conference, held on 25 November 2017, will be published in the next issue of the Journal.

## ACADEMIC MEETINGS HOSTED BY SASOM CHAPTERS AND BRANCHES

The KwaZulu-Natal chapter and Klerksdorp, Mpumalanga,

Northern Cape, Port Elizabeth and Western Cape branches hosted local academic meetings throughout the year. Usually held in the evening, these meetings were well attended by SASOM, SASOHN and SAIOH members, and other health practitioners.

## MEETINGS WITH GOVERNMENT AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Following complaints from the public and reports on service quality by inspectors, the DoL established an occupational health forum in 2015 to ensure the delivery of quality health services. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by officials from the DoL, the Compensation Fund, SAIOH, SASOHN and SASOM, to regulate working relationships.

Prof. Daan Kocks and Dr Jenny Sapire, representing SASOM, SASOHN and SAIOH representatives and officials who serve on the DoL's occupational health forum, met on 15 February 2017, to discuss the content of a document on occupational health services for employers. The DoL officials decided to regulate occupational health service providers through a registration process. In the forum's quarterly meetings, Annexure 3 of the Construction Regulations, compensation of occupational diseases and injuries-on-duty, reports on inspections conducted at occupational health service providers, the proposed National Health Insurance, and other pressing issues were discussed.

## SASOM WEBSITE ([www.sasom.org](http://www.sasom.org))

The SASOM website is active, and new information and presentations are uploaded regularly. However, some individuals are reluctant to have their presentations placed on the website, and this has been respected.

## SASOM GUIDELINES

During the past year, the SASOM guidelines on absenteeism, medical requirements for fitness to drive, the occupational health audit, and medical records have been revised. The 8th Edition of SASOM Guidelines on aspects of occupational medicine is now available and can now be ordered from the SASOM national office.

The SASOM Chairman and Executive Committee appreciate the contribution to quality occupational healthcare by all occupational health practitioners, and wish them a peaceful holiday season and renewed passion to provide the highest level of care to all in 2018.

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