



37th SASOHN National Conference – 2017

In 2007, West Rand hosted the 27th South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN) National Conference at Misty Hills Country Hotel, set in the heart of the Kromdraai Valley in Muldersdrift. A decade later, in 2017, West Rand became proud host of the 37th SASOHN National Conference at the Hilton Hotel in Sandton, from 1-3 November. The city of Johannesburg is affectionately known as 'Jozi' – hence the conference theme 'Pure joy – pure Jozi' which means the joy of being part of Jozi's vibrant atmosphere... being in the city of gold!

The **Pre-Conference Workshops** have become so popular that all three were booked out by September of this year. These workshops are directed at ongoing professional development of selected skills in occupational health. Three specialists in the field of occupational health and labour relations gave presentations as follows:

Dr Naseema Vorajee, an anatomical pathologist and Head of the Pathology Division at the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) conducted a workshop on 'Occupational lung diseases'. Aspects of silica and asbestos, and their related diseases in miners in South Africa, were discussed. Dr Vorajee reminded the audience that autopsy examination of cardiorespiratory organs for deceased miners is required under the Occupational Diseases in Mines and Works Act, regardless of the clinical cause of death. The organs are removed and sent to the NIOH pathology laboratory for examination. They undergo comprehensive macroscopic and microscopic examinations to identify the presence of occupational lung disease.

Mr Michael Botha, a law and industrial relations specialist with 38 years of experience, hosted a workshop entitled 'Your rights during business transfers'. Questions that stick in one's mind whenever there is a transfer of ownership of a business were answered. These included: What is the transfer of ownership of a business? What is 'a going concern'? What is transferred? Mr Botha warned that it is important to understand your 'rights' during business transfer, especially with regards to the terms and conditions of employment, benefits, and automatically unfair dismissals.

Dr Busisiwe Nyantumbu-Mkhize, a senior medical scientist in ergonomics employed in the occupational medicine section at the NIOH, presented 'Work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs)'. 'MSDs', said Dr Nyantumbu-Mkhize, 'occur most commonly in areas such as the neck, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands, lower back and lower limbs, with lower back pain having the highest prevalence, followed by neck and/or shoulder pains'. Symptoms include: pain and tenderness, burning sensation, muscle spasms and weakness, swelling, paraesthesia, decreased sensation, and crepitus. Risk factors are classified under physical, psychosocial and environmental factors. MSDs can be managed by applying occupational health principles, namely workplace surveillance and workers' health surveillance.

The first day's proceedings were celebrated with a cocktail function. Mentorship awards were presented to all occupational health nurses who had mentored students throughout the year, in recognition of their efforts. Everyone embraced the dress code of 'denim and diamonds', adding a sparkle to the evening. **Day 2** was packed with visits to exhibitor stands, spot prizes, and expert presentations. Exhibitors, drawn from a wide variety of service providers, proudly showcased their products and services. At regular intervals, the 30 lucky draw prizes, provided by the generous sponsors and exhibitors, were awarded.

SASOHN is appreciative of the many experts from an array of associated fields, who shared their expertise and motivated the audience with their presentations. Dr Elna Rudolph, a medical doctor and clinical head of 'My sexual health', presented 'HIV and female sexual health', with emphasis on the most common female sexual dysfunctions, viz. low libido, anorgasmia and sexual pain. A summary of current HIV treatment guidelines was given. Dr Elizabeth Kaye-Petersen, a retired South African Nursing Council (SANC) member and expert on the SANC technical task team for the national

continuing professional development programme for nurses, presented a talk on 'Ethical practice for occupational health nurses'. Much of this presentation focused on the impact that one's attitude has on overall service delivery. Mr. Jacques Woest, the Regional Client Services Manager of the Sentinel Retirement Fund, presented a talk on 'Financial health'. His presentation stressed the importance of retirement savings and how to achieve a sound income during ones' retirement.

Dr Sheldon Zielesnick, a specialist psychiatrist at Crescent Clinic in Randburg, spoke on 'Understanding bipolar mood disorder.' Dr Zielesnick described how bipolar mood disorder, bipolar affective disorder and manic-depressive disorder are all interchangeable terms; clues for diagnosis include depression starting in early teens; excessive sleeping; and a family history of bipolar disorders. Advocate Janet Early, an Advocate of the High Court of South Africa, discussed in detail 'Introduction to forensic sciences in occupational health'. Dr E Kok, a urologist, provided a humorous but thought-provoking insight into 'The role of testosterone in male health', plus a guide to delegates in their health promotion programmes for men. Dr Butch McAulay, medical doctor and occupational health medical practitioner, reminded the audience of 'Common occupational health diseases', as he highlighted the cases he had managed recently.

This busy but informative programme was concluded by the motivational speaker, Robert Msweli, an engineer by profession and the executive manager of Rand Water's operations division. He really lived up to his theme 'Let us get motivated for 2018!'

The conference concluded with a spectacular **Gala Dinner** in the Hilton Ballroom. Everyone looked smart in their 'black with a touch of gold' – the theme of the function. The SASOHN President, Denise Minnie, cordially presented the certificates of appreciation to OCSA, Amtronix and NS Clinical Technologies for their significant financial support. The 'Mentor of the year' award went to Yvonne van Zijl of Corobrik Lawley. The 'Janet Taylor Award for best diploma student' went to Shelley Maartens of the OCSA Academy of Excellence. The SASOHN 'Corporate occupational health nurse practitioner of the year' award was given to Kitty Prinsloo of Corobrik Odendaalsrus. SASOHN Western Cape received the 'SASOHN region of the year' award, and the President's Award went to Morag Roberts. Finally, SASOHN honorary life membership was awarded to the remarkable Kim Davies (past SASOHN President).

Day 3 of the conference was 'back to business' with the SASOHN annual general meeting. Updated links to the minutes are available on the SASOHN website. SASOHN would like to thank the organising committee for the delivery of yet another outstanding event, and looks forward to meeting, developing and networking with members at the SASOHN Academic Days in May 2018.

Report by:

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Kitty Prinsloo (Corporate OHNP of the year award, 2017)



Yvonne van Zijl (Mentor of the year award, 2017)

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