



SASOM Annual General Meeting and Conference: 25 November 2017

The KwaZulu-Natal Chapter of The South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) hosted the SASOM Annual General Meeting (AGM) at 16h00 on 25 November 2017 at the Coastlands Hotel Umhlanga in Durban.

At the AGM, SASOM National Secretary, Dr Jenny Sapire, reported on the SASOM activities during 2017, including:

- The 'Medical requirements for fitness to drive' seminar for occupational therapists on 5 and 6 May 2017
- The SASOM Annual Congress on 9 and 10 June in Kempton Park, where Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) and South African Society of Occupational Health Nurses (SASOHN) members also presented papers, and the ICOH National Secretaries held a meeting
- Two seminars with international presenters were held at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Public Health (SoPH). Prof. Tom Fuller from the USA presented on 'Global issues in occupational health and safety' and 'Innovations in industrial hygiene approaches to infection control' on 17 July 2017. Olaf Kvaløy from SINTEF Digital Acoustics in Norway gave an overview of the Wireless Intelligent Hearing Protective Device on 4 September 2017
- Quarterly meetings of the Department of Labour (DoL) Occupational Health Forum in which Annexure 3 of the Construction Regulations, compensation for occupational injuries and diseases, the proposed National Health Insurance, and reports on inspections of occupational health services were discussed
- A DoL workshop on the Regulations for Hazardous Biological Agents was addressed by Prof. Mary Ross on 29 June 2017
- Academic meetings, with excellent attendance, were held by the following SASOM branches: Klerksdorp, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Port Elizabeth and Western Cape

The SASOM Executive Committee voted in for the year ahead comprises: Prof. Daan Kocks – Chairman; Dr Andre Kotze – Vice Chairman, Dr Jenny Sapire - National Secretary, Dr Adriaan Combrinck – Treasurer. Dr Basil Dhaniram, Dr Steve Goosen, Dr Mahomed Jina, Dr Jan Lapere, Dr Andre Louw, Dr Angel Ndhlovu, Dr Funi Ngcakani and Dr Nick van de Water were voted in as members of the Committee.

The theme of the SASOM Conference which preceded the AGM was 'Practical Workplace Issues'. The delegates were unanimous in their praise of the excellent presentations which included:

- The challenges of absenteeism, by Dr Nikki Connellan of

the Independent Counselling Advisory Services

- Management of absenteeism and 'sick' certificates, by Dr Jan Lapere, a SASOM Executive Committee Member
- Inhalant food allergens and asthma in the workplace, by Prof. Mohamed Jeebhay, the Head of the Occupational Medicine Division in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine, and the Department of Medicine, at the University of Cape Town
- Key issues on design and implementation of a substance abuse programme, by Dr Greg Kew, an occupational medicine specialist from Cape Town
- Voluntary male medical circumcision and the benefits thereof, by Mr Brad Mears
- Occupational chronic kidney disease of unknown origin, by Prof. David Rees, the Head of Occupational Medicine and Epidemiology at the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), and Professor of Occupational Health at the School of Public Health (SoPH), University of the Witwatersrand
- An update on the revised SASOM Guideline: Medical requirements for fitness to drive, by the author Dr Greg Kew
- Report on the activities of the DoL's Occupational Health Forum, by Ms Jabu Mhlophe, Deputy Director of Occupational Health at the Department of Labour
- An update on the Compensation Fund and the latest legislative changes from the DoL, by Ms Milly Ruiters, Chief Director: COID Services

Where the authors gave permission, their presentations were uploaded to the 'Information' column on the SASOM website: info@sasom.org.

Planning of the next SASOM Annual Congress, to be held in mid-2018, is underway; details will be announced in due course.

SASOM MEMBERSHIP 2018 AND THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SOUTHERN AFRICA JOURNAL

Membership renewal forms and subscription invoices for 2018 were sent out early in December 2017. Members are asked to ensure that SASOM has the correct contact details to secure receipt of all issues of *Occupational Health Southern Africa*. A questionnaire based on the articles is inserted into each issue of the Journal and successful completion thereof, within six weeks, can earn three Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for a member. Thus, six correct questionnaires in the year can earn a SASOM member 18 CEUs.

Report by:

Jenny Acutt

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New Technology and Noise-Induced Hearing Loss seminar at Wits SoPH: 2017



From left to right: Thérèse Maarschalk, Mary Ross, Olav Kvaløy and Van Zyl Brink

Photograph: Angela Butkovic

The South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) organised a very successful seminar on 'New technology and Noise Induced Hearing Loss' at the School of Public Health (SoPH), University of the Witwatersrand, on 4 September 2017. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) project leader, Van Zyl Brink, introduced the speaker, Olav Kvaløy, from SINTEF Digital Acoustics in Norway. Olav is an electrical engineer involved in circuit design and acoustics. After starting his career in the acoustics department of the Norwegian Institute of Technology, he spent 10 years as an engineer in an ear, nose and throat (ENT) hospital department. Olav is active in the Norwegian audiological society, and for the last 17 years has been a research scientist at SINTEF in Trondheim in the acoustics department, where one of the most important projects has been the development of a wireless intelligent advanced hearing protection communication system.

Olav presented an overview of the Wireless Intelligent Hearing Protection Device developed by SINTEF and some preliminary results of a pilot study of the device at a surface mine in South Africa. As part of a trial of multipurpose wireless sensor networks to enhance safety and health for miners, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pretoria sponsored a collaboration between SINTEF and the CSIR to assess the feasibility and acceptability of the hearing protection technology, and its potential use in the mining industry. The pilot study, arranged by Dr Thérèse Maarschalk, was conducted at Voorspoed mine, where volunteers from different areas and doing different jobs wore the hearing protection during their normal shifts.

Some of the features of the hearing device are initial 'noise leak' testing around the earplug; real-time, personal noise exposure measurement throughout the shift (outside and inside the ear canal); adjustment of protection, depending on the environmental

noise level; communication from others through a microphone system; measurement of temporary threshold shift; and digital collection of the continuous exposure data for each individual, which can be downloaded to a database.

The pilot study enabled Olav to investigate the experiences and opinions of a small sample of surface miners, including a drill rig operator, a mining operator and boilermakers who used the intelligent hearing device, and to compare their personal exposures to the activities during the work shift. One of the most valuable outcomes of the pilot study for the workforce was the fostering of self-empowerment, with the involvement of each worker in reviewing his exposure visually in graphic format and thus seeing the risks of removing protection during the shift.

The seminar was well attended by members of SASOM, the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH), the South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN), and a variety of other interested individuals, from audiologists to engineers. Olav encouraged the 50-strong audience to engage in a lively discussion on both the technology of, and the means to improve, hearing protection across all industries. At the request of the participants, he gave the optional additional presentation on tinnitus, a topic in which he has a keen interest. The analogy of tinnitus being akin to phantom limb sensations, and the potential management of the condition, stimulated further animated discussion, before the seminar was closed on behalf of SASOM and the project team by Prof. Mary Ross.

Report by:

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