

SASOM launches revamped website

A new interactive and dynamic website for The South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM) was launched on 5 October 2018. This replaces the previous version which did not have specialised functions, such as a 'members only' login area with complimentary individual access to the SASOM Guidelines. The revamped website also has features that are accessible to both members and the general public, such as frequently asked questions (FAQs), and current and topical occupational medicine and occupational health information. The new platform will also facilitate timeous administration and other in-house issues by the SASOM National Office.

Documents of interest to SASOM members and the general public will be uploaded (or updated) on the new website on a regular basis. The presentations delivered at the SASOM Annual Congress, which was held in June 2018, will be uploaded on the website (in the cases where presenters have given their consent for dissemination). The same process will apply to future SASOM congresses and conferences.

The revamped website provides a new dimension to benefit SASOM members in good standing, particularly as related to accessing information of interest to occupational health professionals, such as changes in legislation, standards, norms, policies and guidelines. For more information please access www.sasom.org.

ENDORSEMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL DECLARATION ON TUBERCULOSIS

Members will recall that SASOM was one of the South African occupational health associations which recently endorsed two Statements on tuberculosis (TB) by the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), viz. 'Preventing TB amongst Health Workers' and 'Preventing TB amongst Silica-Exposed Workers'. The Statements and endorsers can be accessed at <http://www.icohweb.org/site/ICOH-TB-Statements.asp>. In addition, the Statement related to silica-exposed workers has been published as a position paper by Occupational and Environmental Medicine, and can be accessed at <https://oem.bmj.com/content/early/2018/09/25/oemed-2018-105315>.

On 26 September 2018 in New York City, USA, world leaders endorsed the United Nations (UN) Political Declaration on TB, 'United to end TB: An urgent global response to a global epidemic'. Both ICOH and the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA) participated in the aforementioned UN General Assembly Meeting on TB. Due to very intense efforts over the past year by ICOH, IOHA and other partner organisations, the suggested language related to TB in workers was successfully included in the endorsed UN Declaration which now identifies 'healthcare workers, miners and others exposed to silica' as high-risk vulnerable groups. To date, the focus of the global TB community has been on case identification and treatment. The main objective of the participation of ICOH and IOHA in the UN General Assembly Meeting on TB was to raise awareness of alternative approaches to prevent TB, through occupational health and safety interventions. The final text of the UN Political Declaration on TB is now available online in various languages and can be accessed at http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/3.



ICOH was represented at the UN General Assembly Meeting on TB by Drs Gwen Brachman, Perry Gottesfeld, Marilyn Fingerhut, and Sophie Kisting (Executive Director of the South African National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH)). IOHA was represented by the immediate Past President, Andrea Hiddinga-Schipper (left)

Photograph: Perry Gottesfeld

The next steps in this process will be the development of work plans to facilitate assistance to countries and organisations to implement workplace practices to reduce silica in workplaces and to protect health workers. These efforts will take place via the ICOH TB-Silica Subcommittee of the ICOH Scientific Committee on Mining Occupational Safety and Health (SC MinOSH), and the TB-Health Worker Subcommittee of the ICOH Scientific Committee on Occupational Health for Health Workers. The leadership of these subcommittees is currently reaching out to ICOH Scientific Committee members, IOHA, and the 65 organisations (to date) that have endorsed the ICOH TB statements. Besides SASOM, other South African entities are endorsers, viz. the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH), the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), TB Proof, Minerals Council South Africa, the Q(h)ubeka Trust, and the School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town (UCT).

SASOM wishes all its members and their families and communities 'Compliments of the Festive Season', and healthy and safe holidays. May the New Year 2019 be happy, hopeful, successful and rewarding for you and your loved ones.

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