



Report from SAIOH President and Council Members

MESSAGE FROM THE SAIOH PRESIDENT

It is hard to believe that we are now in the final quarter of 2018, a year in which many volunteers serving the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) Council, the Professional Certification Committee (PCC), and SAIOH local branch committees have once again worked to improve SAIOH and to promote our institute and our profession. Without these dedicated people, the growth and important changes required to ensure that SAIOH remains one of the leading occupational hygiene institutes in the world would falter.

Associations and institutes such as SAIOH are dependent upon those who serve and those members who take advantage of the opportunities provided for learning, development, certification and simply communicating with their peers.

Our key strategic focus during 2018 has been on our branches and, as is shown below in the reports generated by various SAIOH members, we really are improving support and delivery at grassroots level.

I have always recognised the importance of our branches, however my experience at the recent KwaZulu-Natal branch meeting made me once again realise that we do not need to travel far to attend national and international conferences, or even to attend full-time education, to learn.

The session comprised two excellent presentations by Alan Hanley and Lloyd Askham who presented, respectively, on the suitability of hearing protection devices (HPDs) and on HPD fit testing. Even as a seasoned occupational hygienist, I benefited from new information on changing technology and availability of tools and programmes to help us better understand these aspects. This is exactly what our meetings should aim at. You can definitely teach old dogs new tricks!

As you read this article, our annual conference will be over, and we will be preparing a report on the content and sessions for those of you who were unable to attend. With a strong programme and good registration numbers, we are hoping for and anticipating a successful outcome. We have included a special session for the SAIOH branch Chairs, to close out our strategic objectives and pave the way forward. We anticipate that this session will better inform decisions for the ongoing development of SAIOH structures.

This is my final column as President of SAIOH and I would like to thank our members for entrusting me in this position for the past year; it has been a privilege to serve in this capacity. I wish all of our members and their families safe, healthy and restful holidays, and send you all good wishes for 2019.

Julie Hills

SAIOH President 2018

OBITUARY – VINCENT ROBERTSON (6 SEPTEMBER 1950 – 4 JUNE 2018)

It was with deepest regret and a tragic sense of loss that SAIOH learned of the untimely passing of Mr Vincent Robertson, one of the true 'GREATS' in the fields of acoustics and noise in South Africa.

Vince, as he was affectionately known, was married and had two children. His main qualifications were a National Diploma in Electronic Engineering (1977) and a BSc degree in Physics (1982). In addition, he obtained several qualifications in quality and quality management. He joined the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) in 1970 as an Assistant Technician and eventually became Director of the Acoustics Division.

Vince served as President, Chairperson, and member of several committees of the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), the International Electro-technical Commission (IEC), and the SABS, all related to the fields of acoustics and electro-acoustics. His expert guidance was instrumental in the approval of around 38 South African National Standards (SANS) or ISO SANS acoustics- and noise-related standards. These included SANS 10083: The measurement and assessment of occupational noise for hearing conservation; SANS 101451: Hearing protectors - Parts 1, 2 and 3; and SANS 10103: The measurement and rating of environmental noise with respect to annoyance and to speech communication. Other valuable contributions included standards on sound propagation; calibration devices; audiometers; noise prediction; sound power level (L_w) labelling of noise sources; traffic and aircraft noise; noise inside vehicles; building acoustics; reverberation rooms; sound impact



Vincent Robertson

investigation for in-ear monitors (IEMs); warning devices and audible alarms; and several standards on sound power. He contributed to 21 international and national publications and assisted with the compilation of the National Environmental Noise Regulations.

Vince was very active in training, compiling teaching material and serving as an examiner for the University of South Africa's (UNISA) National Certificate in Noise Control. Insofar as hands-on training was concerned, he was involved in teaching at the (then) Witwatersrand and Pretoria Technikon, especially as related to occupational audiometry. He was also active in the presentation of the British Institute of Occupational Hygienists (BIOH) courses in physical hazards and noise at the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT). He assisted in noise- or acoustics-related work for Lloyds of London, South African Airways, Saldanha Steel, and the Richards Bay dry docking facilities. His list of achievements and contributions is endless.

To those of us who knew him on a personal level, he had a boundless personality, peppered with a great sense of humour, and an immense capacity to work with people, all the while remaining very committed and dedicated to his family life. He loved carpentry, camping, hiking and reading.

On behalf of the SAIOH Council and members, we express our deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to Vince's family, friends and colleagues. May his soul rest in peace.



SPOTLIGHT ON THE SAIOH WESTERN CAPE BRANCH SAIOH quiz event

On 14 September 2018, the SAIOH Western Cape branch hosted its second general knowledge quiz in as many years. Looking to build on the format used during the previous year, six teams (comprising, on average, five members each) gathered to test their knowledge on occupational health and occupational hygiene, pitted against that of their peers. Access the Journal website (www.occhealth.co.za) for an in-depth report of this entertaining, educational event.



More than just pretty faces – The winning quiz team members proudly display their prizes. L to R: Albie Louw, Carmen Markus, Le Roux Bothma, Martie Roberts, Pierre Wepener

Photograph: SAIOH Western Cape branch

SAIOH Mini-Conference on Pesticides

Ben Franklin once said, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest", and with the SAIOH Western Cape Mini-Conference held on 21 September 2018, professionals from various industries and sectors came together to enlighten themselves, as well as each other.

The picturesque Tygerberg Nature Reserve in Welgemoed, Cape Town, played host to all the hungry minds attending the Mini-Conference. The theme for the day was 'Pesticides: A holistic approach', and encompassed several speakers from different fields, associated with the evaluation of risks of pesticide exposure in formal and informal work settings, the responsible use of pesticides, legislature related to pesticide storage, and the biological effects of pesticide exposure.

With coffee in hand after the 'meet and greet', the Western Cape branch Chair, Riaan le Roux, welcomed all delegates, exhibitors, and speakers. A joke was shared about a farmer standing awkwardly in a field near Rawsonville, and with a few giggles the first speaker was introduced.

Prof. Aqiel Dalvie, Director of the Centre of Environmental and Occupational Health Research (CEOHR) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), and Director of the Southern African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI), focuses his research on the health effects of endocrine-disrupting pesticides. His presentation discussed the usefulness of bio-monitoring in evaluating pesticide risks, as well as the assessment of exposure in

epidemiological studies investigating pesticide health effects in South Africa. Bio-monitoring is the measurement of bio-markers in humans, and can include adverse health effects or the measurement of pesticide metabolites in urine or blood. Pesticides can be divided into different chemical classes – organochlorine, organophosphate, carbamate and pyrethroid insecticides – with organochlorine pesticides, such as DDT, mostly banned throughout the world; and organophosphates, such as glyphosate, widely used as herbicides. Bio-monitoring of organophosphates includes the measurement of blood cholinesterase inhibition, which plays an important role in the essential functioning of the nervous system.

Following a well-deserved tea break, Wiehahn Victor, the CEO of the Canning Fruit Producers' Association, introduced the audience to the world of canned fruit and the role that responsible use of chemical pesticides plays in fruit and employee exposure to pesticides. He was also involved in setting up one of the chemical analysis laboratories responsible for determining the 'pesticide residue', also referred to as the amount of pesticides that may remain on fruit after application to fruit crops. A document referred to as the Maximum Residue Limits (MRL) list was compiled as a guide for farmers, regarding the restricted use of crop-protection chemicals. According to the MRL list, deciduous fruit, such as fresh apricots, clingstone peaches and pears, has a recommended withholding period before the fruit can be processed.

The MD of Chempac (Pty) Ltd., Tom Labuschagne, offered a different perspective pertaining to the supply and use of agricultural pest-management products. Chempac focuses on developing products to reduce or eliminate pesticide residues on food crops. Integrated Pest Management (IPM) promotes the use of safer and smaller amounts of pesticides, as well as alternative control methods. One of the most interesting and simplest methods is that referred to as 'stem barriers'. A fruit tree can be protected against crawling insects or pests that usually gain access to the tree from the ground via the stem, by applying a physical barrier or sticky substance close to the bottom of the stem. This prevents the crawling insect or pest from gaining access to the rest of the plant. Tom concluded by stating that the agricultural industry is not yet able to live without traditional pesticides but, by implementing IPM and using pesticides judiciously, food can be produced safely.

Prof. Hanna-Andrea Rother, Head of the Environmental Health Division and Deputy Director of the CEOHR in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at UCT, discussed a lesser-known problem evolving in the informal environments of the Western Cape. Cape Town's urban townships are inundated with poverty-related pest infestations (e.g. vermin, flies, bed bugs) which create a market for the use of pesticides, both regulated and unregulated. A 'street pesticide' is defined as a legally-registered agricultural pesticide that is decanted into unlabelled domestic containers and sold for illegal domestic use. The term also applies to non-registered pesticides, such as Chinese Green Leaf



packaged products. Concern around 'street pesticides' is arising due to the extensive and ever more common use of highly toxic pesticides intended for agricultural use, and not for domestic use. Large numbers of pesticide poisonings, reported predominantly in children and vendors, occur due to the limited knowledge of the risks involved, as well as the assumption that the products are legal and safe to use.

Following a delicious lunch, one of the Western Cape's own SAIOH members, Fanie Kruger from SafeNet (Africa), a registered occupational hygienist and an experienced trainer in occupational health and safety risk management, presented on the legal requirements pertaining to the storage of pesticides. This aspect is covered under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act No. 85 of 1993), and in the Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Substances (1995) which stipulates: '*The employer shall ensure that the hazardous chemical substances (pesticides) in storage or distribution are properly identified, classified and handled in accordance with the South African National Standard: SANS 10206 – The handling, storage and disposal of pesticides*'. This SANS provides information on the correct construction, location, and other factors (e.g. ventilation and spillage containment) involved in pesticide storage facilities. The importance of the use of the 'Globally Harmonized System (GHS) of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals' for labelling pesticides was stressed, and the hazard classification of pesticides was reviewed.

Last, but certainly not least, Prof. Leslie London, Chair of the Division of Public Health Medicine at UCT and an active researcher in the CEOHR, shared his expertise on the neurotoxicity or biological effects of pesticides. Prof. London highlighted the acute, sub-acute and chronic health effects related to exposure to various pesticides, including organochlorines, organophosphates, carbamates, pyrethroids, fungicides and herbicides. Acute effects may manifest as allergic reactions (dermatitis or asthma). Chronic effects include cancer, various neurotoxic effects, and compromised immune function. Prof. London emphasised the large numbers of pesticide poisonings and their related under-reporting, particularly in women in South Africa.

To conclude the day's events, Riaan le Roux thanked everyone who contributed to the success of the Mini-Conference, including the members of the SAIOH Western Cape Council, the exhibitors representing the companies 3M, SKC, SPA and PathCare, and all the presenters and participants. Minds were stimulated and captivated with the extensive quantity and quality of information presented on this beautiful Friday in Cape Town.

The SAIOH Western Cape branch takes this opportunity to thank the organisers for creating an opportunity for the investment and exchange of knowledge.

SAIOH MARKETING TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

During 2018, SAIOH has continued its marketing presentations to university students in the final years of their degrees and diplomas. On 3 August 2018, SAIOH Council members, Deon Jansen van Vuuren and Claudina Nogueira, presented to around 70 third-year Industrial Physiology students at the University of Pretoria (UP – Hatfield Campus) and, on 3 October 2018, Deon presented to 55 third-year students registered for the National Diploma in Environmental Health at the University of Johannesburg (UJ – Doornfontein Campus).

The presentations provided an overview of SAIOH as an organisation, including its structure, vision, mission, strategic objectives, national and international standing, benefits of SAIOH membership, demographic composition of members across three categories (occupational hygienists, occupational hygiene technologists and occupational hygiene assistants), the certification and registration processes for occupational hygiene professionals (through the SAIOH PCC), training opportunities that are available from various sources, and events on the SAIOH calendar. Other topics covered included the importance of occupational hygiene in protecting workforces, career paths and job opportunities for practitioners of the discipline, and the support role that SAIOH plays by advertising job opportunities to its members and disseminating students' CVs free of charge. The presentations were well received, and elicited questions from the audience, which led to discussion sessions on various issues.

Members of the SAIOH KwaZulu-Natal branch committee organised a visit to Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) and presented on the aforementioned aspects of SAIOH and occupational hygiene as a profession.

The session was attended by approximately 80 third- and fourth-year students of Environmental Health, from both MUT and the Durban University of Technology (DUT). Like the UP and the UJ sessions described above, the presentations were well received and resulted in great interest and discussion.

Report by:

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