

Mine Medical Professionals Association AGM

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INTRODUCTION

The Mine Medical Professionals Association (MMPA) held its annual general meeting (AGM) on 18 September 2021. The past president, Dr Muofhe Murwamphida, resigned in late 2020, and the deputy president, Dr Dipalesa Mokoboto, stepped in as acting president. At the AGM, Dr Mokoboto was formally elected as the president of the MMPA and Dr Tumi Legobye was elected as deputy president.

GETTING TO KNOW THE MMPA PRESIDENT

For the first time in the history of MMPA, a medical professional working for the Government (State) was elected as president. This was a memorable moment for Dr Mokoboto, as she was elected as president in the year when the association is celebrating its centenary.

Dr Mokoboto was appointed as the Medical Inspector at the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) in 2007, in line with requirements of the Mine Health and Safety Act, No. 29 of 1996. Prior to that, she worked as an occupational medical practitioner (OMP) in the mining industry. Dr Mokoboto holds a medical degree (MBChB) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Postgraduate Diploma in Occupational Health and an MPhil in Medical Law and Ethics – both from the University of Pretoria. She has successfully completed many courses, including: Advanced Health Management (Yale University); Executive Development Programme (University of the Witwatersrand); Operations Management (University of Cape Town); HIV/AIDS Management from Foundation for Professional Development (FPD); Project Management; and Financial Management and Corporate Governance (University of South Africa (UNISA)). Other certificates obtained are for mining and gender studies from the International Mining for Development Centre in Australia, and an international course in Clinical Occupational and Environmental Medicine (University of Gothenburg in collaboration with the University of KwaZulu-Natal).

Dr Mokoboto worked with the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) and the World Bank on a tuberculosis and HIV survey, requested by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) Minister, in 2010; the recommendations led to mines reporting tuberculosis and HIV to the DMRE, annually. She has also lectured to Postgraduate Diploma in Occupational Health students at both Pretoria University and the University of the Witwatersrand on several occasions, and has written articles for publication in *Occupational Health Southern Africa*.

Dr Mokoboto is a member of the South African Medico-legal Association (SAMLA) and has served on different tripartite committees: the Mining Industry TB and HIV Advisory Committee (MITHAC); the Mining Occupational Health Advisory Committee (MOHAC); the Mining Qualification Authority (MQA); the Mine Health and Safety Council (MHSC); the South African National Aids Council (SANAC) steering committee; and the Department of Labour Technical Committee on Occupational Injuries and Diseases. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, she was appointed as a compliance officer for the DMRE, to oversee compliance with COVID-19 regulations and protocols. She has recently been appointed as a member of the Tshiamiso Trust Advisory Committee, which deals with compensation of occupational lung diseases for ex-mine workers.

Announcement of deputy president and thanking previous president

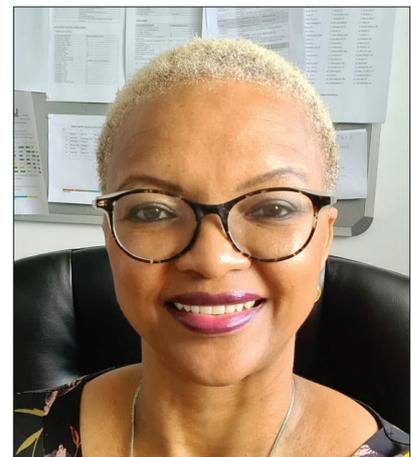
The president announced the new deputy president of the MMPA, Dr Tumi Legobye – a qualified occupational medical practitioner (OMP) who holds a position as a health and wellness executive at Harmony Gold Mine. She has 20 years of experience in the health industry, 14 of which are in management of health services. The president thanked the past-president, Dr Murwamphida, for leading the MMPA in 2020 and keeping it afloat, despite the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, which made it difficult to hold the MMPA Congress and seminars.



Dr Dipalesa Mokoboto
Photograph: courtesy of MMPA



Dr Tumi Legobye
Photograph: courtesy of MMPA



Prof. Zukiswa Zingela
Photograph: courtesy of MMPA



Intentions of the president

Dr Mokoboto indicated that the MMPA has come a long way and that, as president, she intends to continue raising the profile of medicine in the mining industry and serving the interests of mine medical professionals. She acknowledged that there are many obstacles, but that it is possible to overcome them. She added that it is necessary to commit to keeping the MMPA alive and relevant, and mentioned that her intentions and goals are to ensure that the MMPA's objectives are realised. Dr Mokoboto quoted John C Maxwell, who said, "One is too small a number to achieve greatness", implying that she will be depending on everyone to achieve the objectives of the MMPA. This will ensure that its weight is felt not only locally or regionally, but also internationally. She reminded everyone that more can be achieved as a team, since "none of us is as smart as all of us" (Ken Blanchard).

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The keynote address was presented by Prof. Zukiswa Zingela, who is associate professor and head of Psychiatry at Walter Sisulu University and Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital in Mthatha. The topic was mental health and healthcare workers. She pointed out that healthcare workers (HCWs) are in a caring profession and spend most of their time in the workplace. To be able to care for others effectively, HCWs should practise:

- Self-care
- Self-awareness
- Self-management
- Self-love
- Self-sacrifice

Prof. Zingela spoke about Beck's cognitive triad, emphasising that it is a useful tool for HCWs to increase awareness of self and enhance coping strategies. The triad illustrates how to use coping strategies to deal with depression and anxiety. The triad starts with a thought, which affects how one feels and this, in turn, affects how one behaves. Entrenched negative thoughts are linked to depression and might lead to negative views about the world and the future. Anxiety starts

with self, where one has thoughts of vulnerability, and then perceives the world as being dangerous, resulting in uncertainty and fear about the future.

Application of Beck's triad

To find a solution to depression and anxiety, it is important to undergo self-talk by:

1. Being aware of negative self-talk
2. Being aware of the effect of negative self-talk
3. Taking control of self-talk
4. Deliberately changing the negative narrative in one's head
5. Practising strategies for change
6. Positively re-enforcing strategies to address negative self-talk

Prof. Zingela emphasised the importance of differentiating between:

- Assertiveness and aggression, where one stands one's ground without being rude
- Advocacy and militancy, where one needs to guard against militancy where one's view is the only one that is considered
- A worthy fight and an ego fight, which entails fighting to find a solution versus fighting to prove one is right
- Self-appreciation and self-aggrandisement, where one should avoid boasting about one's achievement, and appreciate oneself instead
- Volunteerism and sacrifice, where one might, for example, sacrifice lunch breaks and work continuously throughout the day

CONCLUSION

The highlights of the AGM were the MMPA's celebration of 100 years in existence, the election of a president from government for the first time in the history of the MMPA, and addressing mental health of HCWs and providing strategies to address issues. The MMPA intends to recruit more members, hold more seminars with interesting topics, and host a golf day to raise funds. In this way, the association will stay afloat whilst dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its ramifications.