



From the President's Desk [Prof Tasleem Ras]

It's been a very busy time for the SA Academy of Family Physicians. This being my first quarterly President's Report, there are few pertinent issues that I'd like to focus on.

Our previous President, Prof Andrew Ross, a stalwart of the national family medicine community and longtime UKZN academic, stepped away from his role in the SAAFP Executive due to an ongoing health challenge. Andrew is a quiet and passionate leader, who seems to be tireless in the pursuit of restorative justice and social harmony. Testimony to this commitment was him being awarded the Order of Baobab by the President of the Republic of South Africa in 2015 for his valuable contribution to the development of rural youth. We pray for the best possible outcome as Andrew embarks on the next phase of his therapeutic journey, and hope that his wise counsel will guide the Academy for many years to come.

The annual national Family Physicians' conference, one of the Academy's flag-bearing events, was successfully held at the iconic Cape Town Waterfront in September. While the weather was cold outside, the pre-conference workshops focusing on ultrasound and research training, and the richly diverse programme schedule ensured that participants who attended were never left wishing they were elsewhere. Particularly encouraging was the active participation of registrars from across the country, and in a first for this conference, two UCT registrars, Carlota Sekhokoane and Chrystal Johnson, co-hosted a splendid gala dinner. Some key reflections coming from the conference included ensuring financial sustainability of future conferences, possibly expanding the scope of the conference to include other members of primary health care teams, and ongoing engagement with key decision-makers as part of the Academy's advocacy. These lessons are going to be extremely pertinent as we start the planning process for hosting the World WONCA conference in Cape Town in 2027!

The Academy has long engaged with advocacy, which has focused on ensuring that Family Physicians are recognised within the systems in which they work, both public and private. The growing private practitioner's forum has made significant inroads in their deliberations with healthcare funders in ensuring that Family Physicians are appropriately remunerated as specialists. Additionally, they will provide mentoring to emerging FPs who are planning to enter private practice. Within the public sector, members of the Academy have engaged with the national and provincial departments of health, contributing to conversations around health system strengthening and human resources for health.

Ensuring the financial sustainability of the Academy will be a priority of my tenure, as it has been a priority of my predecessors. This organisation is too important as the official voice of FPs in SA and globally to succumb to the financial woes that currently beset our economy. A simple way to mitigate this risk is to enhance our paid-up membership. If half the registered FPs on the HPCSA register were full members,

our financial sustainability would be guaranteed. This is an objective that could be met but will need our collective efforts to convince colleagues and friends to register and pay their membership fees. Which leads me to my final point, the value that the Academy offers to its members.

While the Academy has been offering a number of resources to its membership for quite some time now, it is important for us to self-reflect and ask whether these offerings indeed add value to the professional lives of our members. A recent national membership survey had such a poor response rate that the results cannot be meaningfully interpreted, except to question the reasons for the low levels of engagement. This is definitely an area that needs more robust exploration.

Our successes in the last quarter, despite some serious organisational and personal challenges, indicates that the SAAFP is robust and resilient in its ability to respond to these challenges. I know that the Executive can count on the support of all members as we chart our way into 2025, and beyond.

Annual Practitioners Congress

Highlights from the 26th Annual South African Academy of Family Physicians Congress

The 26th Annual South African Academy of Family Physicians (SAAFP) Congress took place from 7 to 8 September 2024 at the Protea Breakwater Lodge in Cape Town. The conference was attended by 170 delegates, 40 speakers. 20 exhibition stands [sponsors and non-sponsors].

The theme was “Family Medicine Strengthens PHC—Creating Opportunities from Adversity”, and the congress was co-organised by the University of Cape Town and the University of Limpopo, with support from Stellenbosch University and the SAAFP Specialist Family Physicians in Private forum. We focused on “Respect, dignity and compassion—from the cradle to the grave.” This year’s congress brought together family physicians, registrars, and healthcare professionals from across the country to explore critical issues in primary healthcare and family medicine.

It is safe to say that we explored these topics in-depth, and we all have several take-home messages to reflect on. Over 50 delegates (around one-third of the attendees) completed the post-congress feedback survey, and the congress received an overwhelmingly positive review. Attendees praised the organisation, content, and networking opportunities, including the pre-congress workshops. Sessions like the Gift of the Givers talk, the ethics plenaries, and the district an aesthesia workshops were particularly impactful. One of the key themes highlighted during the congress was the importance of ethics in medical practice, with plenaries emphasising respect, dignity, and compassion in patient care. Chronic disease management was another area of focus, with discussions around non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and infertility.

Additionally, practical workshops and seminars like supporting people who use drugs, the ethics of human microbiome research and practical strategies on exercise prescription for health provided attendees with hands-on tools they could apply immediately in their work. Another important takeaway from the congress was the emphasis on self-care for healthcare providers. Many sessions touched on the need for healthcare professionals to prioritise their well-being, as this ultimately impacts the quality of care they provide. The presentations are available on the conference website for those who missed the congress or want to revisit any sessions.

Regarding feedback for future events, attendees suggested shortening the conference days to allow for better work-life balance and spreading sessions out more evenly to avoid overlapping crucial presentations. There was also a call for more structured networking opportunities to foster collaboration among delegates. We are grateful for this helpful feedback and have shared these suggestions for improvement with the 2025 Congress organising committee.

A hearty congratulations to all the prize winners for their outstanding contributions:

Poster Presentations:

- Registrars: Marietjie Brits and Tamryn Baytopp
- Established researchers: Faith Sikhau and Ts'epo Motsahi

Oral Presentations:

- Registrar: Andrew Wilkins
- Established researcher: Doudou Nzaumvila

We want to thank all our keynote presenters, panelists, sponsors, chairs, organising and scientific committee members, and everyone who has contributed to improving the overall experience. A special word of thanks to Lucille Potts, our SAAFP administrator, who has kept everything together, both in front of and behind the scenes. To all the attendees and participants - this is our conference; we created the structure, and you made it come alive!

Finally, I wish to reiterate the message shared by Prof Andrew Ross, our outgoing SAAFP president, during his plenary address:

- Become (and stay) a SAAFP member - this is a membership association. Get involved, make it happen, develop synergy with others, and ask 'What can I do to make it happen' rather than 'What can the SAAFP do for me?'.
- Register as a stem cell donor (over 50 delegates signed up during the conference at the DKMS Africa stand).
- Do something for the planet, as the time for action is now.
- Remember to stop and smell the roses (including pausing to enjoy the views of our beautiful natural surroundings, being present, making meaningful connections and being kind to yourself).

Best wishes,

Assoc Prof Klaus von Pressentin

Chair, on behalf of the 26th SAAFP Congress Organising Committee

South African Academy of Family Physicians

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South African Family Practice Journal

The South African Family Practice (SAFP) journal is the official journal of the South African Academy of Family Physicians (SAAFP) and is aimed at all SAAFP members (including family physicians, registrars, associate members, students), working within primary care (both private and public health sectors, as well as urban and rural practice settings) within South Africa and the wider Southern African region. SAFP is a peer-reviewed scientific journal, which strives to provide primary care teams, as well as researchers, with a broad range of scholarly work in the practice, training and learning of family medicine, primary care, primary health care, rural medicine, district health and other related fields.

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Wonca World Congress - 2027

Cape Town has been selected to host the World Congress for Family Doctors, this will be in November 2027, we expect 3000 delegates at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. More information to follow in due course.

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Next5

An initiative that promises to support newly qualified family physicians in their first five years after graduation. With a strong mentorship program, supporting our newly qualified family physicians, webinars, actively part of the family practice journal and a WhatsApp group sharing information, this group has grown over the past year.

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PoCUS

The Academy launched their PoCUS Special Interest Group in May with representatives from all 9 university programs, state, and private practice. Members of the PoCUS SIG then ran a very successful PoCUS pre-conference workshop in Cape Town in conjunction with the Global Ultrasound Institute (GUSI). We are building our training capacity and have plans for more workshops in the rest of the country in the very near future. Watch this space!

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Accreditation of Clinical Trainers

The academy would like to recognize competent and effective clinical trainers. To encourage family physicians to develop expertise and recognize those that are doing well. Visit the academy website for more information.

Congratulations to the below candidates who have been successful and achieved their accreditation certificates.

Gavin Hendriks
Louis Jenkins
Paul Kapp
Roland Kroukamp
Lawson Eksteen

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Specialist Family Physicians in Private

Specialist Family Physician in Private update: Since our virtual meeting update in August, the SFPP exco has had positive engagements with Mediclinic SA, CAMAF, 3sixty health and Medihelp. Mediclinic SA the largest hospital group in South Africa were fully supportive of SFP's having admission privileges at their hospitals and have agreed to make a formal statement confirming this.

The leadership at Mediclinic were knowledgeable regarding the SFP scope of practice and were aligned with SFP's being positioned as the primary specialists for their Hospital At Home programme. We have a follow-up meeting with them scheduled for the 24th October. The CAMAF leadership were also interested in further discussions to explore our specialist scope of practice, but did raise the same concerns as other medical aids, regarding uncertainty of 015 practice code being used by both SFP's and GP's. We will be meeting with BHF to verify that 015 practice code has been issued exclusively to SFPs. 3sixty health were extremely excited by our presentation and already expressed great interest in wanting SFP's to manage their high-risk patients. We will be having a follow-up meeting with them again in October to discuss this and our reimbursement rates. There was a similar response from the Medihelp team and follow-up meetings are being scheduled to discuss this further. Upcoming follow-up meetings for October include Discovery health and Gems. Overall, there has been a surprisingly positive response from most of the funders we've been engaging with, but as with all bureaucratic processes, it will take

numerous discussions to implement concrete changes to existing systems and policies. We are definitely creating awareness and demand for our expertise within the private healthcare landscape. Thank you to the academy and our members for their continued support.

We encourage those we aren't members yet, to join us and show your support for this crusade that affects all SFPs.

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Annual membership fees 2024

Debit orders are the preferred means of payment, complete the form, submit together with proof of banking details and we will do the rest. Note the changes in the membership fees for 2024/2025 you can settle your fees over 10 months at R170.00 per month [only via debit order for a once off debit order of R1650.00. **Registrars will no longer receive free membership from the academy, a small fee of R400.00 will apply**, Interns can also obtain membership at R250.00 and student, R100.00. Specialist Family Physicians in Private Practice who are PAID members of the forum will get a 10% discount on their membership fee.

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